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An Actor's Approach: Stepping Into A Role And A World Of The Past

Danielle Gosselin
University of Central Florida

AN ACTOR'S APPROACH:
STEPPING INTO A ROLE AND A WORLD OF THE PAST

by

DANIELLE RENEE GOSSELIN
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ABSTRACT

To step into a character and a world of the past, the actor must not discard the present, but seek to find connections and links between the worlds. I was cast in the Orlando Shakespeare Theater production of *Sense and Sensibility*, a Jon Jory adaptation of Jane Austen's novel, in the role of Lucy Steele. This was an equity production, and it ran February 6th – March 17th, 2013, in the Orlando Shakespeare Theater's Margeson Theater. Lucy is a female character from England in a period often referred to as the Regency era. As a woman from today's United States of America, first I explored how Lucy's words and actions fit into the society of her time, and second I explored how I, a contemporary actor, could organically step into her shoes.

One of the greatest tools I had to help me address these questions was the playwright himself, Jon Jory. He was at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater for the 2012 Harriett Lake Festival of New Plays, during which he gave a keynote address and taught a master class in acting, in which I participated. Furthermore, I had the unique opportunity to personally interview him regarding *Sense and Sensibility* and his connection to the world of Austen and her characters. Along with applying this insight, I applied tools from his acting master class to my work on his *Sense and Sensibility* text. This special access to the playwright greatly influenced the work and served as a key into Lucy's world.

In addition to working with the playwright, I further researched Austen and her work, because Lucy and her world originate there. I explored various resources about England's Regency era society and the role of women in this society. By comparing the world and people of the play to the current cultural and political landscape with which I am most familiar, I found

fundamental links between people living in different times and places, breaking down walls between Lucy's world and my own.

Finally, this performance thesis project utilized the practical acting, voice, and movement skills, which I cultivated in my studio work as an MFA acting candidate at the University of Central Florida. It was a wonderful opportunity as an aspiring young actor to participate in an equity production and work with professional actors. I exercised my stage dialects training by using a standard British dialect, and I applied what I learned in my theatre styles acting class and in various movement classes to develop the behavior and physicality of my character. In order to preserve the new information gained from this study, I chronicled my explorations and discoveries throughout the rehearsal and production process. Through my work with the playwright Jon Jory, my research on Jane Austen and the Regency era, and my application of what I learned in the studio, I strove to create a model process for an actor to utilize when stepping into a role and a world of the past.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When I found out I had been cast in the role of Lucy Steele in the Orlando Shakespeare Theater production of *Sense and Sensibility*, I was extremely excited for the opportunity. This was my professional debut and my first attempt at a character from England's Regency era society. I remember auditioning for the season in the fall of 2012, and Lucy Steele made an impression on me even at this point in the process. Her behavior and her role in the story intrigued me. Once cast, I did not initially think to pursue it as my thesis, but when I found out Jon Jory, the playwright, would be in attendance at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater's 2012 Harriett Lake Festival of New Plays, the idea began to form. I decided to turn Lucy Steele into my thesis role.

While exploring the angles from which I could approach this thesis, I realized how little I knew of England's Regency era society, specifically the middle to higher class communities of Sussex, Devonshire, and London, which exist in the realm of *Sense and Sensibility*. Then, as I started to look more closely at Lucy, I began to ask myself what motivated her behavior and her choices. My examination always led back to the conclusion that her actions were dictated by the conventions of the Regency era society. Because of this, I came to the decision to make stepping into a role and a world of the past the major topic of my thesis. This topic is twofold: first I explored how the character, Lucy Steele, fits into her own world, and second, I explored how I, a contemporary actor, could honestly step into her shoes. I wondered what my contemporary perspective would bring to her actions and behavior. I would like to define contemporary as encompassing all relevant social conventions, social etiquette, social relationships, language choices, gestures, dress, and physicality in today's (2013) United States of America.

Working on Jory's adaptation of the classic novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, by Jane Austen served as my first major introduction to Austen's world and characters. In the past I had only minor knowledge of Austen's canon. Two years ago I saw *Pride and Prejudice*, another adaptation by Jory at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater. In addition, I had seen several movie adaptations of Austen's novels, but prior to being cast in this show I had never read an Austen novel. So, this work was somewhat of an intensive induction into Austen's world and England's Regency era.

In the past I had a bit of experience working on period pieces, but always from a musical theatre point of view. While pursuing my Bachelor of Music degree at Murray State University in Kentucky I performed the role of Alice Ford in the opera *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. True to the setting of the original Shakespeare script, we set the opera in the English Renaissance era, observing the styles and traditions of this time period. Last year I performed in the University of Central Florida's production of *Ragtime*, which deals with the racial and social conflicts at the turn of the twentieth century in America. *Sense and Sensibility*, however, was my first exposure to the Regency era in England and the conventions of this society.

Perhaps the best commencement point for this thesis was the examination of England's Regency era in my initial research chapter, "Chapter 2: The Regency Era: Stepping Into the Past." In this chapter I delve into the world in which Lucy lived. Because *Sense and Sensibility* is a study of individual behavior within a specific society, it was paramount that I understood the workings of this society. Austen scholar Leroy W. Smith says it best in his book *Jane Austen and the Drama of Women*, when he writes, "Austen is a social novelist, focusing on the interaction of individuals and groups within a clearly defined community and hoping to reconcile the demands

of self and society" (19-20). In this section, I consider these questions: what were the main conventions of England's Regency era society? What did the people in the Regency era communities of Sussex, Devonshire, and London value? How did one succeed in these communities? What role did women play in the middle to higher class communities of Sussex, Devonshire, and London during the Regency era? To my surprise, this research led me to discover that Austen was somewhat of a feminist for her time. I examine how she attempts to reveal the follies and shortcomings of the patriarchal society through satire. I then explore how I, an actor, can honestly portray human behavior from this time period. Finally, I consider what links exist between this society and my own and what is timeless about this story.

After reading Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and Jory's adaptation of it, I was inspired to examine the similarities and the differences between the two, considering how this affected my portrayal of the character. I provide this discussion in the following chapter, "Chapter 3: From the Novel to the Play." I was immediately impressed by how close Jory's text is to the original, as he often pulls direct dialogue from Austen's novel. On the other hand, I was surprised by the fusion of Austen's two Miss Steeles, Lucy and her older sister Anne, into Jory's one. Though the plot surrounding the character Lucy remains unchanged from the novel to the play, the contrasting personalities and behaviors of the two Miss Steeles from the novel are combined into the one Lucy in the play. In this chapter, I examine how Anne's brashness and Lucy's wiles integrate to create a complex and interesting character in the play. I also consider the benefits and drawbacks of the adaptation process, as well as the relevance of including the original source in my process.

Having the opportunity to meet the playwright himself and work with him in an acting master class served as a major source of insight for this thesis. In the last research chapter, "Chapter Four: Jon Jory: The Playwright's Insight," I utilize information from my personal encounter with Jory and research from his acting technique books to conduct a detailed text and character analysis based on Jory's own format. In Lucy Steele's scenes I break down the basic structure of the text into thesis statement, support material, and conclusion, according to Jory's model, as well as considering objective and obstacle. To complete this analysis I explore the moral theme specifically concerning Lucy's character and actions. Is Lucy completely motivated by "financial considerations" (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 68) as Edward suggests? Or could she, at least in part, be acting in response to Edward's straying affections? What is the justification for the course Lucy chooses in order to get ahead in her society? Finally, I analyze how to apply the answers from the personal interview with Jory to my development of this character.

In chapter five, I keep a detailed rehearsal and production journal, chronicling my process as an actor developing and creating my version of Lucy Steele. I candidly discuss my challenges, discoveries, failures, and successes. In the final reflection chapter, I review the overall experience and process of working on this thesis role. I discuss what I found to be successful as well as what I might do differently in developing a similar role in the future.

In exploring England's Regency era, Austen's work, Jory's adaptation, and Lucy Steele in particular, my eyes were opened to a world that is not my own. This role led me to many questions: how, as a contemporary woman, can I honestly embody a Regency era character? What is involved in the rehearsal process for a high quality, professional regional theatre production? How do I apply the practical tools gained during my acting training to character

work in rehearsal and in production? What are the challenges of this process, and what would I do differently when approaching a role like this in the future? How does utilizing a non-traditional form of character analysis help or hinder my process of character development? What does it require to take a classic piece of literature and turn it into a play? How does the contemporary perspective inform the understanding of this production? And perhaps most importantly, what does it mean to write an academic thesis about the development and the performance of a character? My intention is that this paper sheds light on all of these inquiries in a concise and informative way.

CHAPTER 2: THE REGENCY ERA: STEPPING INTO THE PAST

Sense and Sensibility is a romantic comedy, revolving around the story of the Dashwood sisters, Elinor and Marianne, who live at Norland Park in Sussex. Elinor possesses great sense, while Marianne possesses extreme sensibility. According to Austen scholar Deirdre Le Faye, while the modern usage of 'sense' remains the same:

> [a]t the end of the eighteenth century [sensibility] meant having a nature that was exceptionally sensitive, emotional and susceptible, and Jane Austen uses her sister heroines, Elinor and Marianne, to personify and contrast such a nature with one of calm, rational, practical good sense. (154)

When Elinor and Marianne's father, Mr. Henry Dashwood, dies, Norland Park is turned over to their half-brother, John, and John's wife, Fanny, making it necessary for Elinor, Marianne, their younger sister, Margaret, and their mother, Mrs. Henry Dashwood, to relocate. The Dashwood women are invited by their relations, the Middletons, to move into Barton Cottage, which is a part of Barton Park, in Devonshire. Here they meet Mrs. Jennings, Lady Middletons' mother, and Colonel Brandon, a friend of the Middletons and a bachelor intrigued by Marianne. Marianne, however, has no interest in Colonel Brandon, who was previously attached to another woman.

Elinor and Marianne's lack of a fortune greatly affects their marriage prospects, but their futures seem promising at the onset. Elinor forms an attachment with the reserved and sensible Edward Ferrars, the brother of Fanny, and Marianne meets the dashing and passionate Willoughby, who rescues her after she twists her ankle running down the hills of Barton Park in the rain. Though Marianne is very impetuous in her dealings with Willoughby, Mrs. Henry

Dashwood encourages the match, as she believes the two will soon be engaged. Circumstances change, however, when Willoughby abruptly departs from Devonshire to go to London without explanation, leaving Marianne lovesick. Then, to complicate matters, Lucy Steele, a relation of Mrs. Jennings' arrives at Barton Park and immediately befriends and overwhelms Elinor with the details of her secret, four-year engagement to Edward Ferrars. Though this is a blow, Elinor is sure of Edward's affection and believes he remains with Lucy out of duty and obligation. Lucy secures Elinor's confidentiality because, without a fortune of her own, Lucy fears Edward's mother, Mrs. Ferrars, would disapprove of the match.

When Mrs. Jennings leaves to go to London the two heart broken sisters, Elinor and Marianne, accompany her. Marianne hopes to be reunited with Willoughby there, but when Willoughby runs into Marianne at a party, he openly dismisses her, denying his feelings for her. Colonel Brandon then discloses the scandalous story of Willoughby's past to Elinor. Willoughby had a tryst with Brandon's ward Eliza, leaving her pregnant and alone. When Willoughby's elderly relation, Mrs. Smith, discovered this secret she disinherited him, and he immediately left Devonshire. Mrs. Jennings relates the remainder of the story, asserting that once Willoughby squandered all his money, he became engaged to the wealthy heiress Miss Grey in order to sustain his extravagant lifestyle.

In London Elinor also runs into Lucy, who has worked her way into Fanny and John Dashwood's good graces, securing an invitation to stay and visit in their home. However, when the secret of Lucy and Edward's engagement is divulged by a servant, Edward's mother, Mrs. Ferrars, and his sister, Fanny, are outraged at the match, just as Lucy had feared, and she is

thrown out of the Dashwood estate. Mrs. Ferrars disinherits Edward, promising the inheritance, instead, to his younger brother Robert.

After having found no success in London the Dashwood sisters decide to head home to Barton Cottage, but on the way Marianne falls deathly ill. After learning of her illness Willoughby comes to visit and speaks with Elinor, asking her forgiveness for his bad behavior. Elinor pities him and tells Marianne of his visit, but Marianne only sighs, admitting the folly of their relationship. Colonel Brandon and Mrs. Dashwood arrive soon after relieved to discover that Marianne is recovering.

When the Dashwoods return to Devonshire they learn from the gardener, James, that Mr. Ferrars has been married, and they assume it is to Lucy. However, when Edward shows up at their cottage everything is revealed. He explains that upon losing his fortune, Lucy quickly ended the engagement, marrying his younger brother Robert, the new inheritor, instead. Edward is now free to propose to Elinor, whom he truly loves, and the happy couple is engaged. Meanwhile, Marianne's affections for Colonel Brandon grow after they spend some time together, and they too become engaged.

Sense and Sensibility is set in Austen's own time period, commonly known as the Regency era. This can be confusing because of the many designations for this period of time as asserted by 1815 Boston merchant and traveler, Joseph Ballard, and biographic scholar, Alan Rauch:

> The broadest designation for the period between 1714 and 1830 is the 'Georgian Period' because it encompasses the reigns of George I, George II, George III, George IV. The Georges are associated with the House of Hanover in Germany

> from which the fifty-four-year-old George I was plucked, so to speak, to ensure a continuous reign of Protestant monarchs. (4)

The Regency era received its name when the mentally unstable King George III was deemed unfit to rule as monarch in 1811. His son, George IV, served in his place under the title Prince Regent until King George III died in 1820 and George IV officially became monarch. Therefore, the actual Regency only lasted nine years, but the term has come to encompass a much broader period of time and an entire cultural ethos (5):

> In spite of the fact that the Regency was distinctive for self-indulgence, dandyism, and reckless spending, the term itself has come to represent – even to this day – the notion of elegance and style that were a by-product of lives led in extravagance. (5)

The setting of England's Regency era is a vital element of the story of *Sense and Sensibility*. This chapter explores the psychology, beliefs, and behavior of middle to higher class people in England's Regency era communities of Sussex, Devonshire, and London. It also exposes the many limitations and injustices inherent in this time period. Furthermore, it compares the Regency era society to our own contemporary one, drawing parallels where applicable. This study is intended to serve, first, as an attempt to better understand the workings of Lucy Steele's world, and second, as an examination of how she fits into this world, considering various reasons for her words and behavior.

In his personal email interview with me, Jory asserted that Austen was a social satirist during her time (see Appendix B). Austen scholar Valerie Shaw agrees with this view in her article, "Jane Austen's Subdued Heroines," writing, "Austen…uses irony as a comic method of

exposing social follies and hypocrisies…she is critical of her own society's conventions" (282). By intimately exploring the individual thoughts and actions of her characters, she reveals flaws of the entire Regency society. According to Ballard and Rauch, "In general, Austen's novels tried to stem what she perceived to be a rapid moral decline in society" (17). Through a critical lens Austen saw her world leaning toward a materialistic bent. "[T]he opportunities for social advancement were undergoing a radical (and, for Austen, a not entirely desirable) transformation. 'The English are forever upon the alert…to make money out of everything'" (17).

Understanding the spirit and climate of this society helps give insight into Lucy Steele's circumstances and the reasons for her behavior. Lucy is born into a slightly lower middle class position without the promise of an inheritance; therefore, in order for her to thrive in this society, she must use her wiles. By attaching herself to Edward and his expected inheritance, Lucy finds a way in, which she is unwilling to quit without regard to his changed feelings. In his book Smith argues:

> Austen stresses that the system is more the enemy than either the self or others, that men as well as women are victims, or potential victims, and that distinctions among individuals are more likely to reflect differences in vulnerability or degree of victimization than in ability or accomplishment. (74)

According to this statement, Lucy is a victim of the system. She is compelled to use scheming ways "to acquire the place which society denies her" (75). Lucy's "collaboration with the patriarchal order" (78) raises questions as to her methods, but she is fighting for her chance at success, in compliance with the bounds of her society.

Smith makes an interesting comparison between the characters of Lucy and Willoughby. He reasons that both are "guided by self-interest. Both are adventurers…'in the sense that they aim at wealth without scruple as to means'" (79). Without any intention of seriously considering Marianne, Willoughby spends a great amount of time sharing intimacies with her, heedless of the affects on her feelings. While speaking with Elinor he confesses his deceptive behavior, "'trying to engage her regard, without a thought of returning it'" (Austen 279). Short of the promise of his elderly cousin's fortune and because of his want for an extravagant lifestyle, he could not actually pursue a life with Marianne. And though he later finds himself genuinely fond of Marianne, he still chooses a rich marriage over genuine affection.

Similarly, Lucy attaches herself to Edward at the young age of eighteen and holds him to this engagement four years later, regardless of changed affections, thus choosing money over love. Then when Edward is disinherited because of his very engagement to Lucy, she leaves him and marries his younger brother, Robert, proving her steadfast loyalty to the fortune, rather than to Edward. Both Lucy and Willoughby enlarge their fortunes and elevate their social positions through rich marriages.

Lucy, however, admits no remorse for her actions, while Willoughby struggles over his behavior, evidenced in his confession to Elinor (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 62-4). Nonetheless, Smith maintains the justification for Lucy's behavior, "[T]he path of the dispossessed female is more difficult than that of her male counterpart. Lucy cannot afford Willoughby's agonizing" (80). Lucy is at a greater disadvantage, starting off in a lower position than Willoughby. She is born without the hope of an inheritance, whereas Willoughby has the hope of inheriting the fortune of his elderly cousin, Mrs. Smith, up to the point when she discovers his affair with

Colonel Brandon's ward, Eliza, officially dismissing him. As Smith writes, "Austen criticizes both the individuals in whom self-interest rules…and the social environment that produces such dedicated spirits" (80).

In the book *Jane Austen Among Women,* historian and critic Deborah Kaplan focuses on the culture of women during Austen's time, often referencing popular conduct books that supported the patriarchal order. According to Kaplan, "the ideology made the female into a specialist in sensibility, she was supposed to have a particular propensity and need for friendship" (63). This can help explain Lucy's eagerness to share her secrets with her new confidant, Elinor. It is socially acceptable for Lucy to require much of Elinor's time and advice, as the female need for friendship is so great. Furthermore, according to West's conduct book, *Letters to a Young Lady*, which Kaplan references, "'Reproof and advice are the most sacred and the most frequent duties of friendship'" (64). This belief is reaffirmed in an excerpt from Lady Pennington's conduct book, *A Mother's Advice to Her Absent Daughters*, when she argues that a friend should be "'steady in the correction, but mild in the reproof of your faults'" (64). Lucy exploits this ideal when she seeks Elinor's counsel. She is very aware of Elinor's adherence to proper social conduct and knows her secrets will render Elinor incapable of action as far as Edward is concerned. In these circumstances, Lucy manipulates the rules to best serve herself.

Conduct books stressed candor and discretion, but did not fret over secrets shared between women. Instead, "They recommended selecting friends capable of discretion because they supposed that a woman whose confidences were revealed would be embarrassed or disgraced by the exposure" (71-2). As a further protection of private conversations between women, Kaplan asserts that during the Regency, "gender superseded kinship and status as the

primary bond of identification" (72). Even though Elinor is friendly with Edward it would be inappropriate for her to break the "female bond" and share information from private conversations with Lucy. Finally, these conduct books stressed the importance of associating with other women of the same social status. "'Above all things, avoid intimacy with those of low birth and education'" (66). Lucy capitalizes on her relationships whenever possible, especially her higher status relationships with Mrs. Jennings and the Middletons. This positions her at a higher rank, eventually allowing her way into Fanny Dashwood's good graces.

During the Regency era, both men and women could be victims of the patriarchal order, but, as Smith asserts, women had a greater disadvantage as "social values are based on the possession of property; the female is subordinated to the male in the family and in the society" (71). At the opening of *Sense and Sensibility* Mr. Henry Dashwood has just passed away, leaving his wife and daughters in search of a new home since women do not commonly inherit property. During this era the female's best bet of attaining security and wealth was through marriage. "The female's unfavourable position encourages the view that entrapment is her motive in courtship and barter of her beauty for financial security her purpose in marriage" (71). From the onset Marianne voices her disdain of this convention, "Must wealth always be mentioned?" (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 10). Except for the genuine affection in Elinor and Marianne's future marriages, Smith argues, "the marriages in *Sense and Sensibility*, existing and proposed, illustrate the destructive working of the patriarchal order" (72). Examples include the marriages of Willoughby and Miss Grey, which ruins Willoughby's spirit, Sir John and Lady Middleton, who have nothing in common, and Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood, who are rich in wealth, but not in conversation.

Another obstacle for middle to higher class people, especially the female, during the Regency era is the absence of a fulfilling occupation. In her essay, "Pride and Prestige: Jane Austen and the Professions," women's studies writer, Alice Drum, states, "Occupation has little consequence for Austen's early gentry protagonists as long as there is income from their respective properties and inherited wealth to support their gentlemanly pursuits, large country houses, and families" (92). While an occupation outside of the domestic life is not popular for either gender, men still are the only members of middle to higher class society permitted to hold one. In fact, the only major characters given an occupation outside of domestic life in *Sense and Sensibility* are Colonel Brandon, whose past military career is briefly mentioned, and Edward Ferrars, who eventually becomes a vicar but only because of necessity. It is interesting to note that earlier in the novel Mrs. Henry Dashwood suggests that if Edward found a vocation his spirits might be improved. "'I think, Edward,' said Mrs. Dashwood…'you would be a happier man if you had any profession to engage your time and give an interest to your plans and actions'" (Austen 88-9). Edward agrees with her assessment, later blaming his initial attachment to Lucy Steele on his boredom and "'want of employment'" (315). As Drum asserts, "the message of Austen's early novels is that a young man is emotionally better off with an occupation" (97).

The conventions of England's Regency era society create rules, boundaries, and obstacles that influence actions and choices. If Lucy had been born into another class, in another location, or at another time, might her actions be justified differently, or have changed altogether? Smith argues that like many people throughout time, "Lucy…is a woman without a place who wishes to be noticed" (79). Lucy is limited by the practices of her society. Had she been born in the

contemporary time, she would have the options of many more means of forwarding herself, such as studying at a university and pursuing a career of her choosing. But during the Regency era, women did not have access to so many options. Lucy must seek out a wealthy marriage to further herself. As Austen writes, Elinor points to Lucy's unrealized potential, "Elinor saw, and pitied her for the neglect of abilities which education might have rendered so respectable" (112). Instead Lucy chooses to compromise her integrity and her intelligence, acting within the limitations of her society. This opinion is asserted by Smith, who claims:

> She is one of several examples in Austen's novels of women who work within the society and with its weapons in an effort to acquire the place denied them, but whose performance is crass and demeaning…Like other oppressed people they learn to dissemble, to scheme and to act to achieve their ends. (79)

Lucy does not reveal any qualms about choosing convenience over integrity. Like Lucy in her time, there are plenty of women and men today who manipulate the system to further themselves rather than working to change it.

Smith makes a very interesting comparison between Elinor and Lucy, likening Elinor's "discretion and prudence and Lucy Steele's hypocrisy and calculation" (84). He suggests that the difference may be "more one of degree than kind" (84). The distinction in their actions is that "Lucy Steele dissembles for consciously exploitative purposes, whereas Elinor disguises her wishes and feelings the better to 'fulfill her obligations as a daughter, a sister, and a member of society'" (84). Both women work within the bounds of their society to achieve their objectives, however, Elinor is able to maintain a higher moral position as she endeavors to act with charity, while Lucy acts with self-interest.

Finally, the style, movement, and etiquette in the Regency era differ significantly from the contemporary tradition. According to former Guildhall School of Music and Drama professor Lyn Oxenford, in her book, *Playing Period Plays*, "Regency manners were formal to the point of dullness" (219). Lucy makes sure to be the picture of decorum, executing all manners to keep up appearances. One of the most common greetings in this time for the female is the curtsey, originally spelled, courtesy, according to Orlando Shakespeare Theater artistic director Jim Helsinger, in his compilation handout, "Regency Era Movement Guide" (1). It is interesting to note the original spelling of courtesy, which literally means the showing of polite behavior, clearly illuminating the link between the meaning and the gesture. Lucy curtsies upon first meeting the Dashwood sisters and later when she chances upon Edward Ferrars. Oxenford states:

> From 1800 onwards a slightly different type of curtsy was used because of the high-waisted dress with the narrow skirt…The curtsy was…taken stepping back and bending the back knee, which left the front leg extended to its full length with the toe pointed. (190)

This movement creates an appealing line in the dress and is reminiscent of a graceful ballet dance step.

The clothes can prove somewhat of a challenge to the contemporary actor, but Oxenford sees them more as a key into the world of the play, "if only the actor will allow them to [be] and not try to behave as if he were in his usual clothes" (182). All the accessories of this period offer another challenge. In the first scene with Elinor, Lucy carries a parasol, personal handbag, and stole, and these items must be used with ease and grace. "The long stole, which was draped over the forearms (not around the shoulders) was very difficult to manage gracefully" (219). It is

particularly troublesome to control the stole at this position because it tends to slip from the arms with any degree of movement. Therefore, the movement must be adjusted to be smaller and more precise. Helsinger stresses that the female figure must remain "asymmetrical" (8) when standing or sitting, so as to create an elegant sort of pose, or picture. And Oxenford takes this idea a step further, writing, "The actress must be aware of the picture she presents; the head poised proudly, the body with a trim waistline, and the hands arranged in an attractive position suitable to the character she is playing" (185). It is also important that the back remains straight, rather than slouched, at all times, and while sitting the legs should remain uncrossed. In addition, Oxenford states, "The walk should be a smooth glide with small steps" (190). Because of the number of rules and degree of intricacy, appearance is highlighted as a very important value during the Regency era. Much weight was put on how a person dressed, moved, and behaved. Lucy is a proponent of these conventions, and she knows how to use them to best suit her needs.

While there are many differences between the Regency world and the contemporary world, the fundamental link lies in the relationship between an individual and her society. The structure of the society might have changed, but the desire to succeed and thrive in it remains steadfast. Smith directly compares Austen to a contemporary feminist, stating:

> She is moved, as modern feminists are, by dismay and anger over the conditions of woman's existence in a patriarchal society…She uses the narrative and dramatic modes in fiction to explore the social problems of woman's place, with astringent clarity and with hope for their resolution. (45)

While many people may not recognize *Sense and Sensibility* as a work of feminism, this story does expose the injustice of the patriarchal society, as women's only hope to find success is

through rich marriages and men's only hope, through an inheritance. It is a satirical commentary on a person's place in society, encouraging individuals to escape those structures to discover their real selves. As Smith asserts, Austen promotes the vision that "individual men and women can attain mutual happiness through a discovery of the real self, their own and others' – a knowledge…that unites them in a true society" (45).

CHAPTER 3: FROM THE NOVEL TO THE PLAY

The story of *Sense and Sensibility* underwent quite a few alterations before receiving its first publication. Austen began writing a novel entitled *Elinor and Marianne* in about 1795 in the form of letters exchanged between characters. It was one of Austen's first works. After setting the novel aside for years, Austen took it up again in 1809, considerably revising it as a straightforward narrative under the new title *Sense and Sensibility*. In 1811 *Sense and Sensibility* became her first published novel (Le Faye 154). This classic novel received a subsequent alteration in 2010 when Jory decided to adapt it into a play.

This chapter compares Austen's original novel to Jory's adaptation of it. Since there is a great deal more information from which to draw in the novel, it serves as a significant resource for the development of Lucy Steele. Most important to my exploration is the fact that there are two Miss Steeles in the book, sisters Anne and Lucy, who have been fused into the one character of Lucy in the play. Dialogue from both characters and aspects from both of their personalities have been incorporated into the character in the play. In this chapter I consider the following guiding questions: how do the individual personalities of the two Miss Steeles from the novel inform the personality of the one Lucy Steele in the play? How do the additional details in the novel inform my choices in developing the character of Lucy? What is gained in the adaptation process? What is lost in the adaptation process? As an actor, working with the adapted play, is it necessary to utilize the original source?

Comparing Austen's original work to Jory's theatrical adaption of it is an important part of my process in developing the role of Lucy Steele, providing vital insight into Lucy's mind and the world in which she exists. Jory takes great care in preserving the authenticity of Austen's

language, often pulling exact dialogue from the original text. After reading the novel and comparing it to the play, I found most of my dialogue to be word for word from the novel with only slight alterations where necessary to keep the flow of the action. In fact, Jory has created a condensed, theatricalized version of the original. As far as Lucy Steele is concerned, the most discernible difference between the novel and the play is that in the novel Lucy has an older, unmarried sister Anne, often referred to as Nancy, or simply Miss Steele, whereas in the play she does not. It is important to note that the personalities of Lucy and Anne have been combined in the one character of Lucy in the play, while the plot surrounding Lucy remains the same in both works. Therefore, as an actor I must portray aspects from both sisters' personalities.

In the novel Anne is written with an abrasive, obnoxious personality. She is a nearly thirty-year-old spinster with plain features and a lack of social grace. Elinor Dashwood disapproves the "vulgar freedom and folly" (Austen 109) of her indulgent chatter and boorish behavior. Indeed, Lucy's more indelicate lines in the play about the 'beaux' are taken from Anne's dialogue in the novel. "'And had you a great many smart beaux there? I suppose you have not so many in this part of the world; for my part, I think they are a vast addition always'" (108). Jory also transfers Anne's more probing lines from the novel to Lucy in the play. "'And how do you like Devonshire, Miss Dashwood? I suppose you were very sorry to leave Sussex'" (108). Austen indicates that these lines are "said rather abruptly" (108), fitting Anne's personality. In fact, in the novel it is Lucy, who "generally made an amendment to all her sister's assertions" (111), excusing Anne's less appropriate behavior. For example, in response to Anne's indelicate comments about the 'beaux,' Lucy cries, "'Lord! Anne, you can talk of nothing but beaux; you will make Miss Dashwood believe you think of nothing else'" (109).

Anne also has no qualms monopolizing the conversation and filling it with colloquialisms. For example, in this excerpt from one of her long-winded speeches about 'beaux' Anne says:

> 'Nay, my dear, I'm sure I don't pretend to say that there an't. I'm sure there's a vast many smart beaux in Exeter…I was only afraid the Miss Dashwoods might find it dull at Barton…For my part, I think they are vastly agreeable, provided they dress smart and behave civil. But I can't bear to see them dirty and nasty.' (108-9)

This speech crosses the line of decorum, using the slang word 'an't' and the less than proper adjectives 'dirty' and 'nasty.' Anne dives into all this chatter about 'beaux' in her initial meeting with the Dashwood sisters. Thus, the overwhelming intimacy Lucy forces upon Elinor during their first meeting in the play is in direct line with Anne's personality in the novel. Because of the inclusion of Anne's personality in this character, I, the actor, can justify exploring this behavior as Lucy in the play.

In fact, in the play Mrs. Jennings says it is a servant who gives up the secret of Lucy and Edward's engagement, but in the novel it is Anne who spills the beans, as Mrs. Jennings describes, "'poor Nancy, who, you know, is a well-meaning creature, but no conjurer, popped it all out, 'Lord!' thinks she to herself, 'they are all so fond of Lucy, to be sure they will make no difficulty about it'" (223). Anne's simplemindedness is further exposed when she runs into Elinor on a Sunday in Kensington Gardens. Without any prompting from Elinor, Anne tells her in detail about the whole affair, but not before addressing her own affairs and obsession with the

Doctor, whom she references throughout the book, an attachment which seems to be completely created and fueled by her own imagination:

> 'But why should not I wear pink ribbons? I do not care if it *is* the Doctor's favorite colour. I am sure for my part, I should never have known he *did* like it better than any other colour, if he had not happened to say so.' (236)

Anne never forgets to entertain herself with her own fancies.

After going into great detail about the exact words Lucy and Edward exchanged regarding the exposure of their engagement and their situation, she reveals to Elinor that she learned all this from eavesdropping. Elinor, who originally believed Anne to be openly in the room with couple, reproaches Anne for eavesdropping and then sharing the information, exclaiming her surprise that they were not all in the same room together, to which Anne replies:

> 'No indeed! not us. La! Miss Dashwood, do you think people make love when anybody else is by? Oh! for shame? To be sure, you must know better than that. (Laughing affectedly.) No, no; they were shut up in the drawing-room together, and all I heard was only by listening at the door.' (238)

Anne has no shame regarding this behavior. Lucy's moments of impropriety and over exuberance in the play are clearly derived from Anne's behavior in the novel, and these examples serve as inspiration for my development of Lucy in the play. Furthermore, there is a certain girlishness and giddiness to Anne's speech pattern that I can realize in Lucy's character by pointing and inflecting key words, while musically rambling through the others.

In the novel, Lucy clearly contrasts her sister Anne, as the younger (twenty-two or twenty-three year old), more beautiful, more socially apt, and more cunning sister. But Elinor

quickly sees past Lucy's external appearance, when Austen writes, "Elinor was not blinded by the beauty or the shrewd look of the youngest, to her want of real elegance and artlessness" (109). Unlike the play, the novel has the luxury of time, and Elinor gets to know Lucy over an extended period, forming a strong and thoughtful opinion of her well in advance of the exchange during which Lucy reveals her secret engagement:

> Lucy was naturally clever; her remarks were often just and amusing; and as a companion for half an hour Elinor frequently found her agreeable; but her powers had received no aid from education, she was ignorant and illiterate, and her deficiency of all mental improvement, her want of information in the most common particulars could not be concealed from Miss Dashwood, in spite of her constant endeavor to appear to advantage…she saw…the thorough want of delicacy, of rectitude, and integrity of mind, which her attentions, her assiduities, her flatteries at the Park betrayed; and she could have no lasting satisfaction in the company of a person who joined insincerity with ignorance. (112)

This personality analysis provides a window into the character of Lucy, but during the play the audience is not privy to Elinor's private thoughts, so these aspects of Lucy, her external cleverness and her inner ignorance, must all come through in my behavior in the play.

In fact, by the time Lucy discloses her secret engagement to Elinor in the novel, Elinor's feelings for Edward have already been revealed to Lucy. Sir John Middleton continually teased Elinor about her crush in front of the Miss Steeles by alluding to the letter 'F,' and when Anne expressed curiosity in it, Sir John divulged Mr. Ferrars' name "in a very audible whisper" (110). Therefore, Lucy goes into the conversation with Elinor, clearly knowing the damage she is about

to inflict. In the play it can be assumed that Lucy goes into the conversation with the same intent, having personally sought out the meeting with Elinor via Mrs. Jennings, but this is her first meeting with Elinor. There is no prior scene in which Sir John reveals Elinor's feelings for Edward. Thus, this knowledge must be conveyed through my tone of voice, in the way I point certain words and watch Elinor for a reaction during specific moments, and through the betrayal of a triumphant smile.

In both the novel and the play, Lucy uses the convention of friendship as an excuse for disclosing her intimate secrets. She plays at propriety and innocence quite well, but her true intentions are layered thickly underneath. During her confession to Elinor, Lucy is careful to act with decorum, "I cannot bear to have you think me impertinently curious; I am sure I would rather do anything in the world than be thought so by a person whose good opinion is so well worth having as yours" (113). Austen's descriptions of Lucy's behavior during this and subsequent scenes serve as a helpful guide for her behavior in the play. These details expose the moments and lines when Lucy really drives her point home, reading Elinor for her reactions. Examples include:

> eyeing Elinor attentively as she spoke…She looked down as she said this, amiably bashful, with only one side-glance at her companion to observe its effect on her…fixing her eyes upon Elinor…cried Lucy, smiling…As she said this, she looked directly at her companion. (112-7)

It is quite useful to match these directions from the novel with the dialogue in the script.

In the novel Lucy is very cunning in how she refers to the moment when Sir John revealed Elinor's secret feelings for Edward:

> ‘[Anne] does not know how to hold her tongue, as you must perceive; and I am sure I was in the greatest fright in the world t’other day, when Edward’s name was mentioned by Sir John, lest she should out with it all. You can’t think how much I go through in my mind from it altogether.’ (117)

Lucy uses this embarrassing reference to shame Elinor, trivializing her feelings. Lucy’s malicious intentions in the play clearly derive from Lucy’s personality in the novel. As an actor it is useful to draw from these moments when I really need to manipulate, or drive, the scene.

As a combination of the two sisters from the novel, in the theatrical adaptation Lucy does set out to dash Elinor’s hopes and affections for Edward, but at the same time she seeks out real friendship and confidence in Elinor, as she really has no one else with whom to share her secrets. So that in the play when Lucy says, “Are you ill, Miss Dashwood? You seem low” (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 49), she says it with sincerity and true concern for Elinor. In this way, then, the adaptation offers Lucy some redemption where the novel does not. The combination of both Lucy and Anne’s personality traits from the novel allows Lucy a greater arc in the play. I enter the stage with more malicious intentions that shift over the course of the play to more friendly intentions as my relationship with Elinor develops.

However, the extra scenes and details in the novel from which to track character development are lost in the adaptation. Lucy’s scenes in the play directly correspond to chapters twenty-one, twenty-two, thirty-five, and thirty-seven in the novel, while Lucy is generally present in the novel from chapter twenty-one, when she is first introduced as a relation of Mrs. Jennings, through chapter fifty, the final chapter. In addition, Jory’s numerous and quick transitions give the play somewhat of a frenetic pace. At times he sacrifices quality and detail in

the scenes for quantity of scenes, losing the thorough character development that Austen creates in the novel. There is simply more to draw from in the novel. For example, there are more instances in which Lucy tortures Elinor with secrets in the novel than in the play. As Austen critic Stella Gibbons asserts, "Jane Austen makes it plain, it is true, that Lucy herself drew Elinor into conversation on more than one occasion for the laudable purpose of triumphing over her and giving pain" (xiv). Lucy's stay with Fanny and John Dashwood is also given much more time and detail in the novel, so that there is more build leading up to the leak of the secret. Furthermore, Lucy's relationship with Edward is more developed in the novel, allowing greater insight into how Lucy conducts herself around Edward. For Anne says that when Edward gave Lucy the option of leaving after he was disinherited:

> 'she told him directly, she had not the least mind in the world to be off, for she could live with him upon a trifle, and how little soever he might have, she should be very glad to have it all.' (Austen 237)

Lucy always presents herself as sincerely devoted to Edward right until the very end. While these moments are lost in the adaptation, it is my challenge as the actor to allow them to inform my character and find ways to display her nuances.

This leads to the final judgment of Lucy's character and the "financial considerations" (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 68) implied in the play. In the novel Edward finds out about Lucy's marriage to his younger brother, Robert, in one of many letters she writes him while he is away at Oxford. Since "her letters to the very last were neither less frequent nor less affectionate than usual" (Austen 318), Edward had no suspicion of the affair. In both the novel and the play Edward offers the same explanation for the marriage between Robert and Lucy, suggesting,

"perhaps at first accidentally meeting, the vanity of the one had been so worked on by the flattery of the other, as to lead by degrees to all the rest" (317). This conjecture does not seem too far off base, as Robert is a vain character and Lucy, a great manipulator.

However, in her final letter to Edward, Lucy explains her choices:

> 'Being very sure I have long lost your affections, I have thought myself at liberty to bestow my own on another, and have no doubt of being as happy with him as I once used to think I might be with you; but I scorn to accept a hand while the heart was another's.' (318)

Lucy is not given a chance like this in the play to offer explanation. Instead, Edward's suggestion of 'financial considerations' is the last word on the subject. But this information from the novel adds another layer that can be used to color Lucy's actions in the play. After all, she witnesses the affection between Edward and the Dashwood sisters in the home of Mrs. Jennings; she knows of Elinor's feelings for Edward; and she's heard Edward speak of the Dashwoods with great regard. It is not surprising, therefore, that she detects Edward's change of heart and does not wish to stay in a relationship where feelings have been betrayed. This gives Lucy's actions different justification. It is my challenge as the actor to find moments in the play when I can reveal Lucy's vulnerability and her acknowledgement of Edward's straying affections.

I found it extremely helpful to utilize the original source while developing the character of Lucy Steele. The novel opened up my eyes to new sides of Lucy, new choices for her character, and new reasons for her behavior, offering a great deal of additional information from which to draw. Ultimately, it is my choice as the actor to decide what to incorporate from the novel and what to discard, but it is always useful to have options. The extra details and

differences in the original source do not hinder me, but rather, they only serve to reveal more possibilities. Without using the original source it is still possible to create a strong and well-defined character, but I wonder what colors might be lost? How might Lucy's arc over the course of the play be altered? Also, is it not my responsibility as an artist to seek out as much information as I can when developing a classic character?

CHAPTER 4: JON JORY: THE PLAYWRIGHT'S INSIGHT

I was first introduced to Jory in the fall of 2010 when I was assigned a book review project for Julia Listengarten's class: Research Methods in Theatre. I read and reviewed Jeffrey Ullom's 2008 book, *The Humana Festival: The History of New Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville*. Ullom details Jory's work and accomplishments at Actors Theatre of Louisville, his involvement in creating The Humana Festival of New American Plays, and his overall influence on American regional theatre and new play development (see Appendix C). I remember being thoroughly impressed, and little did I know I would, only two years later, have the opportunity to meet this theatre legend in person. The Orlando Shakespeare Theater in Partnership with the University of Central Florida puts on a new play festival every year called The Harriett Lake Festival of New Plays, or PlayFest for short. As fate would have it, one of the plays selected for PlayFest 2012 was Jory's adaptation of Henry Fielding's 1749 novel, *Tom Jones*. Along with receiving a staged reading, Jory was invited to teach a master class in acting (see Appendix A) and to give a keynote speech, addressing his theatre career, both of which I attended. In addition, as the PlayFest intern, I was able to secure a personal interview with Jory, in which I addressed his adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* (see Appendix B). These unique opportunities and insights, along with further research on the playwright, influenced the development of my character, Lucy Steele.

Because of this special access to the playwright and the information he provided, I decided to conduct a non-traditional character analysis of Lucy Steele based on Jory's own format. In this chapter I have utilized the format of character and text analysis introduced by Jory

in his acting master class, as well as including ideas from his personal books on acting technique. This version of analysis seems an appropriate choice, as the work in question is Jory's own.

In Jory's acting book, *Tips: Ideas for Actors*, he writes:

> Everything we imagine brings us back to the text, and it is to the text we bring our insights, and it is there we find our challenges. When you have an idea, point to the specific part of the text that will allow you to get the idea on stage. (225)

This idea directly corresponds to advice Jory gave in his acting master class: the actor must break down and know the structure of the text in order to better understand the character. Jory explained that in every scene the text structure follows a usual order of thesis statement, or the basic fact of what is happening, support material, or evidence to support the thesis statement, and conclusion, or what results from the thesis statement. From an actor's perspective, identifying this information is key in understanding the circumstance and motivation for a character. In this chapter I will break down the structure of the scenes in which Lucy Steele is involved. In addition to analyzing the structure, I will also consider the obstacle and the objective in these scenes, for as Jory said, "The big secret is the obstacle and the objective" (Appendix A). To complete Jory's format, I will consider the theme, or moral lecture, of the play in correlation to the character of Lucy Steele. I will then narrow the analysis into smaller details, considering what Jory terms 'the absence,' or the secret desire a character needs to fill, the 'moment of surprise' when a character is knocked off balance, and the level and consistency of a character's energy. Finally, I will examine how Jory's personal interview provides additional insight into the character and story.

To begin, it is necessary to discuss Lucy's role in the play and introduce the scenes, which I will be analyzing. Jory succinctly defines Lucy's role in his personal interview when he states, "Lucy creates the triangle which drives Elinor's story and as such is a crucial plot device" (Appendix B). Lucy is an essential character, serving as the major obstacle keeping Elinor Dashwood from Edward Ferrars. Lucy and Edward became engaged at the young age of eighteen, and she holds him to this commitment four years later, regardless of changed affections. While all of Lucy's motivations to remain in this relationship are not clear, it seems a major motivation for Lucy is to enlarge her fortune and elevate her social position through this marriage, as Edward is promised a rather large inheritance.

Lucy is introduced as a relation of the wealthy Mrs. Jennings, mother to Lady Middleton. In her very first scene Lucy has set up a meeting with Elinor at Barton Park through Mrs. Jennings in hopes to discover more about Elinor's intentions regarding Edward and to stake her prior claim. In Lucy's second scene she again seeks out a meeting with Elinor, but this time it is in London in front of Mrs. Jennings' home where the Dashwood sisters are staying. She shares the news of her successful introduction to Edward's mother, Mrs. Ferrars, somewhat rubbing it in Elinor's face and somewhat sharing it out of excitement with her only confident. In the middle of this scene Edward shows up to visit Elinor and an awkward meeting ensues. Elinor invites both Lucy and Edward inside Mrs. Jennings' home where Marianne currently is residing. Here Lucy is made witness to Edward's very intimate relationship with the Dashwood sisters, as Marianne's behavior indicates. Finally, Lucy's third scene takes place at the home of Edward's sister, Fanny Dashwood, in London, where Lucy has been invited to stay as a guest. Fanny has

just found out about Lucy and Edward's secret engagement from a servant, and in a rage over this deception she literally drags Lucy out of her house by the ear.

In Lucy's first scene with Elinor (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 35-7), the thesis statement is simply that Lucy and Edward Ferrars have been secretly engaged for the past four years. The support material includes Lucy's story about Edward being a pupil of her uncle, the miniature picture of Edward, which she carries, her letter from Edward, and the ring of Edward's containing a lock of Lucy's hair, which Elinor saw Edward wearing at Longstaple. The conclusion is that Lucy has revealed this secret engagement to Elinor. In this particular scene Lucy's objective is to dash any hopes Elinor harbors concerning a relationship between herself and Edward. Lucy's obstacle is trying to read Elinor despite her composure, or her repression of her true emotions regarding the situation.

The thesis statement in Lucy's subsequent scene with Elinor, Edward, and Marianne (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 49-51) is the fact that Lucy is becoming increasingly involved in Edward's life. The evidence here consists of Lucy's story about her encounter with Edward's mother, Mrs. Ferrars, at a gathering the previous Tuesday, Lucy and Edward acknowledging each other in the company of Elinor and Marianne, and the fact that Lucy and Edward exit from Mrs. Jennings' home together. The conclusion is that Lucy and Edward's relationship is confirmed in front of Elinor. The objective in this scene is for Lucy to share and celebrate her good news with Elinor, her confidant, decisively establishing her relationship with Edward by broadcasting the overwhelming success of winning over Mrs. Ferrars. Lucy's obstacle is the undeniable bond between Edward and the Dashwood sisters, which Lucy is made witness to in the home of Mrs. Jennings.

The thesis statement in Lucy's following scene with Edward's sister, Fanny Dashwood (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 53-4), is that Fanny is throwing Lucy out of her home in London. The support material involves Fanny dragging Lucy out by the ear, slapping her, clapping at her, and scolding her for her impropriety. The conclusion is that Lucy Steele runs away. Lucy's objective in this scene is to stay in the good graces of the Ferrars family. The obstacle is Fanny's refusal to accept Lucy or even allow Lucy's presence in her home.

Regarding obstacles Jory writes, "Sometimes the obstacle lies in the actor himself, sometimes outside him in another, or in a group or in a natural order or in society itself" (Jory, *Tips: Ideas for Actors* 6). If I were to sum up Lucy's overall obstacle, I would say it is the bounds of the Regency era society. She desperately wants to move up the social and financial ladder, but her natural position by birth and the society's rules about this are Lucy's biggest hurdles.

The theme of the play is also an essential element of this analysis. As far as Lucy Steele is concerned, the theme seems to be the question of her true motivation. This scene is not directly included in the play, but it is revealed that Lucy leaves Edward after his mother denies him his inheritance even though it is denied because of his very relationship with Lucy. She is gone as quickly as the money and her devotion is proven false. Indeed, after the inheritance is transferred to Edward's younger brother, Robert, she marries him instead. When Elinor questions the match after having heard firsthand from Robert his disdain of Lucy, Edward suggests:

> I know…indeed…I can only attempt an explanation all conjecture. Perhaps, at first accidentally meeting, the vanity of the one has been so worked on by the flattery of the other…as to lead by degrees to all the rest. I might also guess at

> financial considerations but…the result is, I am honorably released. (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 67-8)

At least outwardly Lucy proves to be more interested in fortune than love. However, it is also quite possible that Edward's obvious feelings for Elinor, witnessed by Lucy in the scene in Mrs. Jennings' home, have some influence on Lucy's decision to leave him for his brother Robert. Edward's betrayal of Lucy with his straying affections is possible motivation for her to seek another path. Yet, even with this consideration, it would be hard to deny Lucy's financial motives as well.

In his book, *Tips II: more ideas for actors*, Jory talks about an absence, the secret desire a character needs to fill. He writes:

> the pivotal absence…needs to be based deep in your character's needs and to somehow reveal the beating heart of the story being told…This absence you are finally going to fill is also a metaphor for growth, decline, or important change. (126)

I believe this absence for Lucy is her unsatisfied hunger for a fortune. She attempts to mask this desire with her endless chatter about her love for Edward, when clearly she has a strong attraction to the promise of his money as well. This hunger is hinted at early on in the text when one of Lucy's first questions for Elinor is regarding Elinor's knowledge of Mrs. Ferrars, Edward's mother and the link to the money, "You will think my question now an odd one, I dare say, but pray, are you personally acquainted with your sister-in-law's mother, Mrs. Ferrars?" (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 35). Lucy then bluntly speaks about Mrs. Ferrars and her connection to finances, "I am sure of your faithfully keeping this secret for it must not reach his mother; she

will oppose us, I fear, for I have no fortune" (36). Lucy attempts to mask this financial concern in a previous line pertaining to her engagement to Edward, when she states, "I was very unwilling to enter into it without the approbation of his mother, but I loved him too well to be so prudent as I ought to have been" (36). In the following scene, Lucy again is very concerned with Mrs. Ferrars' opinion of her, as she needs Mrs. Ferrars' approval to marry Edward and thereby climb up the social and financial ladder. Lucy says to Elinor, "I believe her to have taken a fancy to me. She was all sweetness and affability in my presence" (49). Lucy is more transparent in her 'absence' than she might hope.

In the scene with Fanny Dashwood, Lucy's position in society and her hopes of advancing it are brutally exposed by Fanny in this humiliating manner: "Attempting, with not a thought for anyone, to use your nasty, surprising ways to compromise my brother?!...How dare you? You have no fortune, no family, and a scheming character beneath notice" (54). It is written in the stage directions that in response to this insult "(LUCY *howls*.)" (54). Her mortified response to Fanny's degrading comments about her character and her lack of a fortune is a clear indication of Lucy's feelings on this matter. Later when Edward hints at 'financial considerations' as Lucy's motive, Lucy's secret desire to acquire a fortune is clearly exposed.

This scene with Fanny, in which Lucy is publicly called out, also includes what Jory terms the important moment of surprise for the character:

> Maybe an obstacle you hadn't seen coming bangs suddenly into you. Maybe the situation forces you to redirect your energy. Assumptions are destroyed by a piece of behavior. You're caught off balance and have to do it differently. It makes compelling moments. (Jory, *Tips: more ideas for actors* 131)

Lucy never anticipated the situation not going in her favor. She thinks very highly of herself. After all, she sees herself as the picture of decorum and affability, as she has been praised and well regarded by higher society, and she cannot accept that Fanny should not affirm her. This is probably the most humiliating situation she could suffer. After the shock of the initial blow wears off she has to readjust her tactics in order to deal with it. She does this by shifting her focus to Robert Ferrars, the new inheritor.

In his master class Jory also gave advice about the character's energy. He said, "Energy cannot be a constant. Every 40 seconds stop acting and just be. It's okay for a small role to stay high energy. For a large part you have to drop that or you will be abrasive" (Appendix A). In the case of Lucy Steele, I believe it is an appropriate choice for her to be mostly high energy. After all, Lucy is somewhat of an abrasive and unrefined character, so the excessive energy suits. Jory also considers characters "doing the wrong things" (137) in his *Tips II: more ideas for actors* text. He encourages the actor to find the imperfections in her character, and one of which for Lucy can be this overly high energy. He writes, "Looking for flaws in your character's character is sometimes a shortcut to getting inside the role" (137).

In addition to Jory's format for character and text analysis, his answers to the following interview questions provide further insight into the role of Lucy Steele:

> What do you feel makes the story of *Sense and Sensibility* timeless? What do you think Lucy Steele's role is in this story? What do you think we, as modern people, can learn from this Regency era society? What is your connection to Jane Austen? What is it about her work, and *Sense and Sensibility* in particular, that speaks to you? (Appendix B)

Jory asserts that the story of *Sense and Sensibility* is timeless because the themes of the story: the dynamics of family relationships, the mistakes made in love, and the conflict between good sense and passion, are permanently relevant. He claims it is for these reasons that "At the theater you can encounter three generations of women coming to see it" (Appendix B). While the details surrounding these themes may alter from generation to generation, the heart of these matters stays the same. As previously discussed, Lucy's role in the story is to serve as "a crucial plot device" (Appendix B), creating the triangle with Elinor and Edward. Regarding Lucy's disposition, Jory says, "Lucy generates emotions she has no place for and no one to seek solace from" (Appendix B). Lucy has kept her engagement to Edward secret for so long and she has such an exuberant personality that with Elinor she breaks all decorum, using the excuse of friendship to overwhelm her newfound confidant. As far as what today's society can learn from England's Regency society, Jory argues it is the practice of good manners. Without certain social restraints chaos can result, thus endangering civilization. "Good manners makes a virtue of restraint, and mitigates the impact of mistakes and misjudgments. Telling only the truth (as Ibsen shows in The Wild Duck) can destroy as well as enlighten" (Appendix B). Lucy tends to destroy Elinor with her truths. Finally, Jory makes the very interesting claim, "Jane Austen was a social satirist in her time," (Appendix B). I would never have thought of *Sense and Sensibility* as a social satire, but after consideration it is clear that the story does expose social flaws and follies of the society by the means of wit and satire. After all, not only are Lucy's scheming ways exposed in a humiliating fashion by Fanny Dashwood, but Fanny then must suffer the irony of Lucy winning the Ferrars' inheritance, in part, as a result of her own actions to separate Lucy from Edward. Furthermore, Elinor's sister, Marianne is brought to discover the follies of her own

beliefs and conduct. “I was born, I think, to an extraordinary fate. Born to discover the falsehood of my own opinions and to contradict by my conduct my favorite maxims” (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 69). Indeed, most of the characters are forced to face the flaws of their own hubris over the course of the story.

In conclusion, all my explorations have led me back to the text. In his acting master class, Jory asserted that once the actor understands the structure of the text, the actor understands the workings of the character. Ultimately this knowledge allows the actor the freedom to be spontaneous. “Eventually, all our ideas are given flesh on or around the lines…Have the idea, then find the words to play it with” (Jory, *Tips: Ideas for Actors* 225).

CHAPTER 5: REHEARSAL AND PRODUCTION JOURNAL

This chapter includes the journal of my thoughts and discoveries throughout the rehearsal and production process of *Sense and Sensibility*. The thoughts are written casually and informally in a personal journal style with the goal of organically chronicling this daily process as an actor. I will often refer to Lucy the character, as I, in an attempt to bridge the gap between my thought process and hers, but occasionally, when referring to personal challenges within the work, I will separate myself the actor, as I, from the character Lucy, as she. This journal is meant primarily to be a window into my own personal process rather than a prescriptive formula. The journal entries span from December 2012 through February 2013.

December 17, 2012

Today was the first day of rehearsal for the Orlando Shakespeare Theater's production of the Jon Jory adaptation, *Sense and Sensibility*. We started the rehearsal with an initial read-through of the play. I felt well informed on Lucy's character after having read Jane Austen's novel, and this knowledge helped motivate my choices during the reading. I am sure it will continue to inform my choices throughout this rehearsal process. Because of this information from the novel, I was better able to hit key words and accurately capture the tone and personae of Lucy. I found nuances in her temperament, ranging from moments of puppy-like gushing to moments of subtle bullying. It was exciting to sense the energy of the cast, and I could see the story beginning to come to life.

After the read-through we spent a good amount of time working on standard British dialect work. One of the most important things that I want to express in this dialect is the

musicality of it. Standard British tends to utilize a wider tonal range than standard American, and while I played with that a bit today, I know I can take this further. As Lucy, I think I can use the musicality to display my high energy and abrasive tendencies by going over the top with it. Other good reminders for me included: the [ou] shift to [schwa-u]; the elimination of the 'r-coloring' on the ends of words with the unstressed [schwa-r] combination, such as 'sister'; the liquid 'u' in words like 'suit'; the change in 'ask-list' words; the way the [ae] sound lifts towards the hard palate; and the shift of the word 'been' [bIn] to [bin].

I am excited by the energy of this group of people and look forward to the evolution of this rehearsal process.

December 18, 2012

Day 2 of rehearsal! Today we continued table work and focused on my first scene in which I meet Elinor for the first time and confide in her about my engagement to Edward. The first note I was given after my preliminary reading was not to think through what I was saying as Lucy. She is a person who speaks carelessly to excess. Elinor, with whom I am speaking, is the type of person that is able to level with many different kinds of people. She is perceptive, compassionate, and inviting, and Lucy takes advantage of these qualities. In the beginning of the scene all of my lines could really be strung together in a monologue. Elinor does interject things here and there, but it is clear that I am not really taking her words or feelings into account. I want to talk and indulge myself, and I have chosen Elinor as my audience. Mark Routhier, the director of the play, said, "You are going to have to go against every actor instinct." Instead of being a good actor and listening to my partner, I need to bulldoze over her and listen merely to myself.

By the end of the scene I do ask Elinor for advice, but again I am only interested in what she can do for me.

We decided that my character is comparable to a modern day sorority girl or cheerleader type. She is all about making a show when she talks and making herself the center of that show. We also agreed that quick pacing will help me to achieve my goals. I will attempt to really bulldoze through the scene, talking at a clip and barely letting Elinor get a breath in. The funny thing is during this conversation about Lucy's personality, I got an immediate image of a person I know who seems to possess many of these qualities. I will attempt to channel the energy and character of this person.

After this discussion I realized that the Lucy that we are aiming to portray in the play has a lot of Anne Steele's qualities from Austen's original text. In the novel Anne is Lucy's elder sister, but she is omitted from the play. However, some of Anne's dialogue from the novel has been transferred to Lucy in the play, so it may be appropriate for me to think of Jory's Lucy as a combination of Lucy and Anne from the novel. Furthermore, in the novel Anne's character is an over-sharer, but she possesses a type of naiveté about her actions, while Lucy is more of a schemer and knows exactly how she wants to manipulate situations and people with her words and actions. It seems that the direction that we are going with Lucy's personality in the play is more similar to Anne's personality from the book. As I said, my first note was to stop thinking over what I was saying, but rather to blurt it out. This behavior seems to suggest Anne Steele.

December 19, 2012

Today in rehearsal we focused on breaking down the moments in my second scene with Elinor, Edward, and Marianne, in which I become aware of affection between Elinor and

Edward. We divided the scene into beats and sections of "realization" for Lucy. When she first encounters Edward there is an awkward moment for her because she is caught in the act of talking about Edward's mother to Elinor. This is an awkward moment for all three characters, but for different reasons. For Edward it is awkward because he finds himself confronting two love interests at the same time, and it is awkward for Elinor because she harbors feelings for Edward, but also possesses the knowledge or Lucy and Edward's secret engagement. Beyond dealing with this awkward moment, Lucy does not yet pick up on anything peculiar between the other two.

Lucy's first hint of the affection between Edward and Elinor comes after she has entered the Dashwood residence and Marianne says to Edward, "Elinor is well you see. That must be enough for us both" (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 50). This strikes Lucy as an odd comment because it hints at a rather bold concern by Edward for Elinor. But Marianne's following line is a compliment to me, which is enough of an appeal to my vanity to distract me. Then, a few lines later Marianne says, "The sight of you, Edward, is the only comfort it has afforded; and thank heaven, you are what you always were!" (50). This line raises another red flag because it suggests an intimate relationship and knowledge between Edward and the Dashwood family. I did not realize that Edward knew the Dashwoods so intimately. I might start to wonder now about the quantity and nature of his visits to them. Marianne's subsequent lines that really set me off follow, "I think Elinor, we must employ Edward to take care of us in our return to Barton. In a week or two we will be going; and I trust Edward will not be very unwilling to accept the charge" (50). This implication angers me. Why should Edward help the Dashwood sisters move back home? Why is it assumed he would be interested in doing this? How close are they, and

why am I not privy to this? So when Marianne next asks Edward why he didn't visit sooner and how any other engagements could have been more pressing, my retort is sharp and directed, "Young men's engagements are very numerous and they must choose among them" (51). This line is meant to shut up Marianne and to check Edward. I sense very keenly that something strange and inappropriate is going on between Edward and Elinor, and I want to let him know this is not accepted by me.

Some interesting questions came up at the end of the scene, regarding Lucy's take on the exchange. When she leaves the Dashwood's with Edward how does she feel? Is she going to ask Edward questions about what is going on? I have not yet arrived at solid answers to these questions. I do believe Lucy is angry when she leaves and feeling betrayed. I am not sure that she would actually confront Edward about this, however, because she does seem to be concerned about keeping up appearances and this depth of discussion just might not suit. I do not think Lucy has had to deal with anything of substance yet in her life, and it is not in her character to want to go there. Yet, on the other hand, this affection between her fiancé, Edward, and her 'best friend', Elinor, is something that would be hard to ignore. Then, also, why do I eventually go to Robert, Edward's younger brother? Is it simply because of financial considerations, or am I influenced by Edward's betrayal to seek out someone new? I think different degrees of these could both be motives for Lucy to turn to Robert. I know after this scene it is hard for her to ignore the fact that Edward's feelings are questionable. This choice might give me an interesting arc with which to play.

December 20, 2012

Today in rehearsal we covered my final scene in which Fanny Dashwood violently throws me out of her house after learning of my secret engagement to her brother, Edward. We discussed the scene and decided that this is the most humiliating event for Lucy – it is her greatest fear realized. She is being kicked out of the society and life to which she has aspired, and furthermore, Lucy believes herself worthy of this life. We agreed that in actuality Lucy is of a lower rank in the Regency society, as she has no fortune, no name, no property, no 'important' relatives. But Lucy envisions herself as belonging to the upper class society. I believe I do not think myself any less than them; I am not any less pretty, or witty, or talented than they. I feel I have always belonged there and only had the unfortunate luck of not being born into it. After all, it hurts when Fanny drags me by the ear and hits me, but the ultimate insult, "How dare you? You have no fortune, no family, and a scheming character beneath notice" (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 54), is the worst kind of slap in the face. When Fanny calls my character and lack of fortune out, she hits my Achilles heal. This is my worst fear come to life. I could not be placed in a more humiliating situation. The deficiency of my position is the one thing of which I am ashamed.

I do lose in this scene, but the intriguing thing about Lucy is her ability to bounce back because Lucy does get what she wants by the end of the play. She outwits them all when she marries Robert, who now has Edward's fortune. The very thing Mrs. Ferrars was trying to stop her son Edward from doing, her most loyal son Robert does. Even though Robert originally insults Lucy's character, he is convinced to change his mind. Lucy is smarter than she may seem

because she has to figure out how to flatter Robert's vanity and wheedle her way into his affection. She is able to be flexible and manipulate the situation and the people to her benefit.

Today I also had a private dialogue coaching session with Jim Helsinger, the artistic director of the Orlando Shakespeare Theater. We worked on finding key words to stress in order to help bring out the musicality and flow of the dialect. Before working with Jim I tended to give equal stress to most words in the sentence. For example, in my first scene with Elinor there is the line, "You will think my questions now an odd one, I dare say, but pray, are you personally acquainted with your sister-in-law's mother, Mrs. Ferrars?" (35). It was hard for me to find the flow and make my point when stressing every word, but once I chose my key words, 'odd' and 'personally', I was able to move at a faster clip through the rest of the sentence and set up the question in a more interesting way by hitting and coloring the key words. My voice naturally took on a greater tonal range in the way I lead to and hit the key words through the use of inflection. It also facilitated the application of point of view through tone. By coloring the key words in a specific manner, I can now better express what I think about what I'm saying.

December 21, 2012

Today in rehearsal we blocked my first scene in which I confess my engagement to Elinor. After blocking it, the director, Mark Routhier, and I had a discussion and decided to try a new approach with my character. In the book Lucy is much more manipulative and aware of what she is doing when she speaks with Elinor. By the time this conversation occurs, she is already privy to the fact that Elinor has feelings for Edward because Sir John Middleton let it slip one night at a gathering. So, when she tells Elinor that she is engaged to Edward it serves as an underhanded kind of warning. Mark asked me to treat my lines as a monologue at a technical

level. Elinor does speak in between my dialogue, but I am not to pay heed to what she is saying. I know what I have come to say, after all, I set up the meeting through Mrs. Jennings, and it does not matter to me what Elinor has to say. I am also going to now attempt to color Lucy's behavior with an undertone of malice and manipulation. So, she will still be excited about telling Elinor her 'good' news, but instead of being excited because she is so in love with Edward and so happy to be able to share this with a confidante, her excitement is going to have the underlying motivation of putting Elinor in her place. As Mark said, she is like the 'Heather' character, or the manipulative leader of a clique, sorority.

December 27, 2012

We tried an exercise today during rehearsal that helped me track Lucy's thought process during my first scene with Elinor. Instead of bulldozing over Elinor's lines and treating my dialogue as a monologue, I slowed down my speech and directed my focus onto Elinor, reading her responses to make sure I got what I wanted from this exchange. This changed how I played the scene and how I found the motivation for my lines. I go into the scene knowing what I want to say to Elinor, but I must watch her to make sure my words have the desired effect. I am looking for moments when I can choose words that elevate my relationship with Edward over hers. Anytime I can point the lines to this, I do. So far, I have found the following pointed phrases:

> there might be reasons…when we will be very intimately connected…Four years. Our acquaintance however is of many years date. He was four years with my uncle as a pupil…but I loved him too well to be so prudent as I ought to have been…Our first care has been to keep the matter secret…Poor Edward! It puts

> him quite out of heart. I have only…This dear miniature of his dear face…Poor fellow, he writes in such wretched spirits. I did give him a lock of my hair set in a ring when he was at Longstaple last. (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 35-7)

The next layer of the exercise included putting back in that element of excitement, which I use to mask my more manipulative, malicious intentions. This excitement is Lucy's attempt at acting. I am still working on pinpointing specific moments when I cover with excitement. This is not completely mapped out yet, but some lines in which I have found moments for excitement include:

> You are very kind and I like you enormously…I dare say you are, for it was always meant to be a great secret kept so by me to this hour…(my monologue about my four-year engagement with Edward)…The very same! Our first care has been to keep the matter secret; I have only…This dear miniature of his dear face…I did give him a lock of my hair set in a ring when he was at Longstaple last. Perhaps you have noticed the ring when you saw him" (35-7).

My second scene with Elinor, Edward, and Marianne, is eluding me to an extent. We decided that this scene is somewhat less pointed. Lucy has already made her point in the first scene, so this scene serves more as a confirmation of her position. We agreed that I run into Elinor on purpose. I am going to her house with the purpose of letting her know about my good news – my meeting with Mrs. Ferrars. Elinor has been put in her place, and now I am rubbing it in her face, but in a seemingly innocent and excited manner. Later in the scene after Edward enters, I agree to go in to Mrs. Jennings house because part of me is very curious and wants to witness what is really going on between Edward and Elinor. I am struggling with the part of the

scene in which I am standing in the house watching Edward and Marianne carry on in conversation. I have already tracked the exchanges that raise a flag for me, but there is more than that going on. Because I like to be the center of attention, I am upset because I am being ignored. My line about young men's engagements can be pointed directly at Edward, as a way to burn him. I am not yet sure how I feel by the end of this scene. I need to decide whether I leave planning to punish Edward out of anger, or whether I leave set on the path to leave Edward for Robert out of betrayal.

December 28, 2012

Today we focused on the scene with the encounter of Lucy, Elinor, Edward and Marianne, and I am feeling much better about where it stands. I found some answers in physical choices, working from the outside in. During the between Elinor and myself in front of Mrs. Jennings house, we experimented with me grabbing her hands in mock excitement when I get into my story, "If you can imagine…" (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 49). This physical contact not only helped connect me to Elinor, but it also helped connect me to my own body and feel less stilted. I was able to find the element of 'excitement' in an organic fashion rather than a forced one. Furthermore, when Edward later finds us holding hands, it helps to make the moment even more awkward. We also worked the beat after Elinor invites us in to Mrs. Jennings' house when Edward and I overlap dialogue before I say, "With great pleasure" (50). We discovered that if I am always affirmative in my responses while Edward is unsure, it is much clearer where I stand. I want to go in and take this opportunity to see what is really going on between Edward and the Dashwood women.

We then adjusted my intention behind the line concerning young men's engagements. When I tried directing this line at Edward, I started to come off very harsh, and it did not feel justified. My instinct was to direct it to Marianne in an attempt to shut her up because over the course of this scene her endless chatter has gotten on my nerves. This allowed for Marianne and I to have a small exchange, while at the same time keeping up appearances with Edward. After focusing more on physical contact, I became more aware of how much touching occurs between Edward and Marianne, and I found this to be something to which I can definitely react. She touches him in front of me in a more intimate manner than I ever have in my life, and this is very upsetting because, as his fiancé, I believe I should be closest to him.

I attempt to overcome this physical obstacle when I suggest walking out with Edward, clearly establishing our relationship in front of the Dashwood sisters. After playing with it a bit, we found it is much more effective if I let my anger build throughout the scene and then make an immediate shift to a sugary sweet demeanor when I address Edward at the end. It is important to me that I keep up proper etiquette and behavior in front of Edward. We added another layer of physical contact when I exit Mrs. Jennings' house. Instead of walking past Edward, I wait for him to offer his arm, but when he takes his time to acknowledge Marianne and Elinor, I decidedly shove my arm into his and lead him out, allowing the frustration of the exchange to creep into the final button.

Today I also had a costume fitting, which turned out to be quite informative. We talked about Lucy's personality and how her attire and accessories reflect her character (see Appendix D). Lucy is obsessed with keeping up appearances as she climbs the social ladder, so she has a good deal of fancy accessories from gloves to a shawl to a handkerchief. Looking the part is

essential for Lucy. In this way she is very similar to Fanny Dashwood. Both women are concerned with status and power, both women climb up the social ladder through wit and manipulations, but Fanny has the benefit of money. This parallel is very interesting to me, as Fanny and Lucy's main conflict derives from this common desire.

January 1, 2013

Today we did our first run of the show on its feet from start to finish. I was nervous and excited to see where we had come in just over two weeks' time. Overall, I believe it went well for a first run. The story was clear and the characters are more developed. I have a better grasp on Lucy's intentions and arc throughout the play. I know which direction I need to take the scenes now, but I am still playing with different actions and not always hitting the mark quite yet. For example, in my first scene with Elinor, in which I inform her of my engagement to Edward, I am struggling to play Lucy's 'acting' moments when she uses excitement to cover her true motives. I need to find a way to bring the excitement to the forefront, while keeping the manipulative and malicious undertone. Right now it tends to be one or the other. I have to work on playing the layers. Also, I am becoming more confident with Lucy's physicality, but there are still moments when I struggle. The moments that feel the most awkward for me are when I am in Mrs. Jennings home, and I have to stand there and watch Marianne and Edward talk. I suppose it is supposed to be awkward, but I don't want that to be the driving force for Lucy because I think she is ultimately more fiery than awkward. I need to find a way to assert my presence in that scene. Also, I believe the inclusion of more of my props will help me find organic physicality for Lucy. She is supposed to be carrying a shawl, which I did not have tonight, and in the scene with Elinor, I hand her a miniature (picture) of Edward, but I do not yet have any sort of handbag

from which to produce the picture. I think having real physical props will help me step further into Lucy's body and world.

January 4, 2013

Today's rehearsal notes brought me right back to Jon Jory's direction during his master class. Mark first asked me to recall Jory's words, "Points of focus are important: left, right, center, in front, behind, up, and down" (Appendix A), when he pointed out the fact that I was directing all of my focus towards Elinor in our first scene rather than allowing for variety. This made my points unclear because by directing everything at Elinor I was making everything a moment. This brings me to Jory's second point, "Don't make everything a 'moment.' If everything is a 'moment' there are no 'moments'" (Appendix A). Mark asked me to go through my script and figure out which lines to throw away as chatter and which ones to make my point on. I cannot always focus on Elinor. During the throw away lines, I can also throw away my focus to different places in the room, and when it is time to make my point or see how something lands, then I can zero in on her. These moments must be chosen carefully so my intentions are clear. I went back through the novel on Mark's recommendation to find clues in Austen's 'stage directions', and I have since gone through and marked my chosen moments of direct focus in my script. In Austen's text there are such directions regarding Lucy's focus and glances towards Elinor during their conversations as:

> eyeing Elinor attentively as she spoke…She looked down as she said this, amiably bashful, with only one side-glance at her companion to observe its effect on her…fixing her eyes upon Elinor…cried Lucy, smiling…As she said this, she looked directly at her companion. (112-7)

I was able to match these directions and to the dialogue in my script. This exercise has proven to be very informative.

After working on my second scene with Elinor, in which I brag to her about meeting Mrs. Ferrars, Mark gave me the note that I need to enter the scene with an exhilarating energy. I must be extremely excited to tell Elinor, my 'best friend,' my good news, and the trick is that the excitement is completely fake. I am really there to rub this news in Elinor's face, to checkmate her, and to let her know that there is no doubt Edward will be mine. It is a very manipulative tactic that I am playing here. Oddly enough, this character and her fake excitement remind me of the behavior of a person I know. I often leave conversations with this person with a feeling of uneasiness. The syrup-y fakeness and ingenuity are so transparent. I need to bring this slimy cunning to Lucy. And it needs to be big enough so that when Edward walks into the scene I am truly a cat caught with her claws out. My nasty behavior is exposed to him, and this is why the moment is embarrassing and awkward for me.

My dialects session with Jim really reinforced many of these same ideas. Besides a small issue with linking 'r's' from the ends of words that end in 'r' to the beginnings of words that begin in a vowel, I have a pretty good grasp on the dialect. But what I am lacking is clarity and musicality because I am not taking the time to color and live on key words. I tend to either rattle off whole sections, throwing away everything, or on the opposite end, I land on every word, making everything important. Jim also referenced Jory's direction from the master class, recalling that without variety I am stuck in a monotonous rhythm that makes sense of nothing. As Jory said, "Actors lock into rhythms too quickly, locking in the sense as well" (Appendix A). Most importantly, it is not clear how I feel about anything because I am not hitting my points.

After working with him I could feel a difference. By taking time on chosen words and coloring them with a point of view, they had meaning and I found the natural musicality of the dialect through inflection. Then I was able to throw away other lines without losing the sense of the scene because my key words took care of this. Furthermore, the new musicality brought out Lucy's temperament, exposing the girlishness of her character. I made sense of repeated words set up by my acting partner by hitting them with a certain inflection, and I found meaning in the antithesis and comparisons. This text work reminded me a great deal of how I have learned to approach Shakespeare's text. Like Jory says in his book, *Tips: Ideas for Actors*, "Everything…brings us back to the text" (225).

January 9, 2013

Today's rehearsal marked a small victory and a new challenge. We rehearsed the scene in which I initially meet Elinor and tell her of my engagement to Edward. Mark said I am doing a good job of clearly making my points now. This means the work I did going through the play and the novel and deciding on the lines that are directed towards Elinor to make my point was successful. I think I finally understand my objective: to squash Elinor's hopes concerning her relationship with Edward and how to go about accomplishing this with my words. Mark, however, did stress that I need to adapt my tactics based off of her reactions. Lucy's overall speech is planned. She has set up the meeting via Mrs. Jennings, and she has an idea of what she needs to say, but her exact words and the order in which she says them are based off of Elinor's reactions and responses. This type of tracking based on what I am getting from Elinor will help me break up the scene into different beats and actions. I need to be more attentive to what she is giving me. This is somewhat challenging as I had originally approached the scene as a

purposefully inattentive character, too self-absorbed to notice how my words affected Elinor. Yet, since we have decided to change Lucy's tactics and motivation, I need to be able to change this approach as well. In addition, Mark pointed out a personal habit of mine, the smile, which is creeping into the character. While playing Lucy I am using the smile to convey my excitement, but Mark would like me to try to use the lines and the energy and focus behind my delivery of them to convey it. As an exercise I will attempt dropping the smile altogether in this scene, and putting the excited energy on the line. Then, later we can choose where to add the smile back in, so it is not simply a meaningless habit, but an effective tool in meeting my objective.

January 10, 2013

Today we had a movement session with Jim Helsinger in which we worked on salutations, bows and courtesies, as well as standing and sitting, in accordance with the decorum of the Regency time period. I found it very interesting that the kind and degree of movement corresponded directly to social status and relationship. The people in this world are very concerned with following strict social rules. It is just as Jory said in his interview, "Good manners are a glue which makes social intercourse possible. If there are no restraints on what we may say and do a chaos results that can strike at the very heart of what we like to call 'Civilization'" (Appendix B). These social rules help keep order and reliable routine in the Regency world. First, the formality of a greeting depends on the intimacy of a relationship, and this can change as the relationship adapts. Also, when interacting with another person the incline of the head, the offer of a hand, the lowering or raising of the eyes, depends on the relation of the two characters' statuses. For example, if I were to greet to a servant, I would not have to do a full

courtesy. I could simply nod my head because I am in a position of higher status. Furthermore, according to Helsinger's "Regency Era Movement Guide", the actor must:

> make sufficient eye contact to allow the recipient to be certain that it is he or she that is being saluted…before you begin the bow, you should look modestly in the face of the person, which is what we call directing your bow before you make it. (7)

I learned that women, who are familiar with each other, can greet each other with a simple handhold. Since I force the 'friendship' on Elinor by making her into my confidant during our first meeting, I can make it a character choice to grab, or hold, her hand at certain points, further forcing the intimacy of the relationship on her with this informal gesture, or greeting. Also, as a woman familiar with a man, I may offer him my hand, as I do when I exit Mrs. Jennings home with Edward. In addition, we learned that women always stand and sit at some asymmetrical angle, never leaning back in a chair, but keeping proper upright posture. Overall, I feel I have been aware of the period movement, and I have always made sure to hold myself with good posture and observe the etiquette of greeting with a courtesy and head bow. This session was a good reminder, though, and it offered some new choices.

January 13, 2013

Today was a breakthrough day for my character development of Lucy Steele! I finally seem to have figured out the true arc of each scene and the overall arc of Lucy's journey. By removing the habitual smile from my first scene with Elinor, I found a different approach to delivering the line. It became more about putting the excited energy on the line and filling it with specific intention rather than washing it generally with the smile. Now we are able to add the

smile back in where it feels natural. For example, on my line, "You are very kind and I like you enormously" (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 35), I am choosing to smile because it inherently fits my intention. Furthermore, I focused on really reading Elinor's reactions and then getting my next tactic, or action, off of her. Playing it this way allowed the scene to feel more organic and connected. Lindsey Kyler, who is playing Elinor, said she also adjusted her approach from being outwardly shocked and surprised at my news to being more analytical and questioning of the news, reflectively comparing my new information with her prior knowledge of Edward's character. Mark pointed out that this approach is more true to Elinor's thought process in Austen's novel. This new approach of Lindsey's also helped my cause because I had to work harder to read what was going on with her and, as Lucy, I did not always get the reaction I expected or wanted, which gave me something great to work with. For example, after I ask her for advice with my situation, instead of giving away her feelings in an opinionated answer as I had hoped, she says, "Pardon me, but I can give you no advice under such circumstances. It is too much for an indifferent person" (36). This piques Lucy a bit, as indicated in the script, because she expects to have more of an outward effect on Elinor. Mark seemed pleased with this work, noting that my intentions were much more responsive and connected to Elinor.

Next, in my second scene where I meet Elinor on the street to tell her about my encounter with Mrs. Ferrars, we tried taking the maliciousness out of the scene. Instead, I played sharing the news with Elinor with a genuine excitement, and this seemed to work quite well. It gives Lucy more of an arc because she already put Elinor in her place in the first scene, and so at this point she is genuinely excited to share this success with Elinor, who she does have some regard for now that she feels less threatened. This helped my line, "Are you ill, Miss Dashwood? You

seem low" (49). For the first time I felt genuine concern for Elinor, who has always seemed so put together in the face of displeasing information. I have a moment of true worry for her because it seems something really is wrong. This is a bit of a challenge because I have not experienced any genuine emotion in regard to Elinor up to this point, and I must remove Lucy's "mask" for the moment to work. This helps me to discover Lucy's humanity, allowing Lucy to have a bit of a redeeming quality. She is a woman whose relationship was threatened and, because of this, she acted out maliciously towards Elinor to stake her claim, but she is not a cruel person and does not wish Elinor real harm. She simply does not want Elinor to interfere with her plans. I think Lucy can find qualities she respects in Elinor. We did not have a chance to work the next part of the scene in which Elinor, Edward, Marianne, and I all meet in Mrs. Jennings home, but I think this new approach will color it somewhat differently, possibly leaving Lucy feeling more betrayed and hurt by Edward's straying affections than merely angry. This then can be part of what influences my decision to leave Edward for Robert. Of course Robert's money has an appeal, but it is also undesirable to be with a man who is clearly in love with someone else.

January 16, 2013

Today Kelly Kilgore, who plays Fanny Dashwood, and I had a fight session with Bill Warriner, the fight director, for the scene in which Fanny throws Lucy out of her house. Our scene is very physical and encompasses Fanny pulling me in by the ear, slapping me, scolding me, debasing my character, and clapping at me until I run out of the house. It is interesting that some of Bill's notes related to acting and physical choices based on class. Originally Kelly had been bending from the waist as she pulled me in by the ear, but this bowed stature reduced her

status. By standing tall and upright as she pulled me in, she gained more power, and since this ear pull naturally puts me in a stooped position my lower status is harshly contrasted against her higher one. Furthermore, during the ear pull Bill gave me the note to open up my face in pain rather than scrunch it in pain. This reads more plainly and honestly to the audience. Then, for the slap to read best it helps if I cower to Fanny, fitting my position of the victim and my lower class status. Finally, Kelly had been physically chasing me out of the room on her last "Get out, get out. Out!" (Jory, *Sense and Sensibility* 54), but Mark suggested that having to run at me to control me lowers her. Instead, she has chosen to remain still and clap at me until I move, departing in utter fear and humiliation. This choice asserts her command over me, lowering me to the position of puppy running out of the room with a tail between her legs.

Today we also rehearsed the scene in which Elinor, Marianne, Edward and I meet in Mrs. Jennings' home, and Mark gave me the familiar note that I need to really read everyone in this scene. I must allow myself to be surprised by the intimacy of words and of touch between Marianne and Edward. Such lines of Marianne's as, "thank heaven, you are what you always were!" (50), suggest quite a closeness and knowledge of Edward's character, and it is appropriate for me to react to this. I had been holding back in part because I did not want to lose the genuine excitement I had shared with Elinor in the previous part of the scene. But the previous moment does not need to dictate the current one. It is still appropriate for me to be excited with my news for Elinor and then angered by what I witness at Mrs. Jennings' just following. After all, humans are dynamic and changing, and it would make sense for there to be a quick reversal in Lucy's mood once she feels threatened by the intimacy between Edward and the Dashwood sisters.

After rehearsing the scene we did a run of the entire show, and overall I was happy with my progress. I brought a lot my work from rehearsal into my scenes, and I feel Lucy had a clear arc. In my first scene with Elinor, I felt very connected to my objective, pointing specific lines and intently reading Elinor's reactions to find my motivation for the next line in her. I also felt I did not use the smile as a crutch, but as a choice. In my second scene with Elinor, Edward, and Marianne, I was genuinely excited to tell Elinor my story about meeting Mrs. Ferrars, and then I felt much more aware of the energy, words, and body language of the others in Mrs. Jennings' home. I allowed their interactions to affect me, letting my frustration grow throughout the scene. My beats and actions in these two scenes were much more specific. For example, the moment when Edward catches me manipulatively talking to Elinor was immediately awkward for me and I wanted to hide, but then I was able to make a quick recovery and attempt fixing the situation with the line, "We were just…" (50), only to find myself searching, unable to find the words to fill in the lie. My scene with Fanny also felt strong, as I remembered to keep my eyes and face open in pain, rather than scrunched. And the specific hand placement for the new slap and knap worked very well. Mark's major note for me after the run was to begin realizing the bigger, bolder, brasher aspects of Lucy's character by playing with her vocal range. He suggested I begin by exploring my upper register, exploiting the harsher qualities of this part of the voice. As discussed in chapter three, in Jory's adaptation Lucy is a combination of her and her sister Anne's personalities from the novel. Taking Lucy in this direction makes me think that we are leaning towards bringing out more aspects of Anne Steele's abrasive personality. I am excited to try this new approach and see where it takes Lucy.

January 27, 2013

Sense and Sensibility is running in repertory with *Othello* at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater, meaning the plays are performed in alternation by the same cast, on the same set. Recently we have taken a bit of time away from *Sense and Sensibility* as we focused on tech rehearsals and the opening of *Othello*, but now *Sense and Sensibility* rehearsals are back on. We have moved from the original rehearsal space to the performance space, beginning with spacing rehearsals, in which we work out transitions and any differences needed in movement or staging for the new space. I believe the time away did some good for my character work. I was able to process Mark's notes about the brasher, more abrasive aspects of Lucy's personality, and by playing with vocal range, especially exploring the more nasal qualities of the upper register, I have finally found my version of a snarky, manipulative Lucy. Both Mark Routhier and Anne Hering, the Director of Education and the actor playing Mrs. Jennings, said they saw and heard a positive change in my portrayal of Lucy, asserting that she is finally a snarky, big personality. Anne told me that by playing with my upper register I found more vocal variety and musicality in my entire range. It felt different to me too. I felt more in control of the entire scene, like I was leading it for the first time. I think my natural instinct was to follow Lindsey Kyler, the more experienced actor, but for my scenes and character's objective to work, I need to be the more assertive personality. I believe I have finally found the balance between Anne's abrasive personality and Lucy's manipulative one from the novel.

February 3, 2013

We are now in tech for *Sense and Sensibility*. Besides being extremely grueling (a couple of ten-out-of-twelve rehearsals on top of a running show), I find this process to be fascinating. I have never been in a production with this caliber of technical aspects, and I have certainly never been a part of a show with a tech that took so long. Instead of a cue-to-cue tech, we are running each transition multiple times along with the material contained in the scenes. This makes for a very long day. That being said, the tech for this show is beautiful. We are working on an especially large set and then adding numerous music and light cues. It is amazing to discover how much a sound or a light can transform a space and transport not only the audience, but me as an actor back in time into a world that is not my own. The period appropriate music, the lights streaming in from the window gobos, and the chandeliers descending from above make it impossible to be anywhere but England's Regency era.

A special challenge for the tech of this show is the fact that we are doing *Sense and Sensibility* in a space, which is already inhabited by another show—*Othello*. It is bizarre to be on the same stage, with the same people, doing something entirely different. This process has taught me how important it is for tech be on the level that it is, not only to allow the actors to slide into this different world, but also to help audiences who may have seen *Othello* accept this as a different world. I cannot imagine going through this process without these technical resources. It would be too easy for our performances to blend together.

All that being said, the tech process has begun to drain my energy. To be performing during the day and rehearsing at night, or vice versa, is really taxing on all of us. You can see the general health of the cast declining, and I think we will all be glad to move out of rehearsals and

into production. I feel like I am in a good place with Lucy. Mark has continued to give me positive feedback about my new, more snarky direction with her character. I cannot wait to get *Sense and Sensibility* open for many reasons, but king of them is that I will have time to breathe again.

February 5, 2013

The greatest challenge during these tech rehearsals has proven to be dealing with the props. During my first scene with Elinor I have to carry on a parasol, a stole, a handbag with a letter, and a miniature of Edward. Over the course of the scene I use all of these props and at some points I have to manipulate multiple props at one time. I have also found it challenging paging the vom curtains for my exits and entrances with these props. In addition, going up and down the steps of the stage with my long dress and hands full can be difficult. But with trial and practice it is getting a bit more fluid.

Jim Helsinger, the artistic director, has also been giving diction and dialect notes during these tech rehearsals. My biggest note is to slow down and really hit my key words. In concurrence with this, Mark said I really need to point the lines that serve as evidence of my connection to Edward, such as the lines where I discuss the length of my engagement, when I show Elinor the locket, and when I mention the ring with a lock of my hair in it. I am talking at such a clip that it is hard to understand my words, and since Lucy is a major plot device, creating the love triangle with Edward and Elinor (see Appendix B), it is essential that I slow down enough to take the audience through the story. Another note I received is to be louder and project more. I am still adjusting my volume from the smaller rehearsal space to the larger performance

space. I do not yet have a good feel for the acoustics of this space, but I will see how it feels after putting these adjustments in place.

February 6, 2013

We had our first preview performance of *Sense and Sensibility* tonight. Earlier in the day we worked on my scene with Elinor on the park bench. At first we focused on the technical aspects, slowing down my dialogue and raising my volume to project to the back of the theatre. Again, this was a strange adjustment for me because I felt like I was speaking excessively loud already, but this was not true for the acoustics of this space. It helped to play with nasality and my upper range to achieve louder vocal production. Then, we worked on really pointing my key lines. Once I had these technical aspects down, we layered Lucy's enthusiasm back in. This felt connected and solid. We also worked out some specific moments with my props, such as exactly when I shut my parasol, when and how I pull Edward's letter out from my handbag, when I touch Elinor's hand, so I could handle them with more confidence and grace. After running the show tonight, I felt like I was able to keep a lot of what we worked on, but I did not have as much fun playing with Elinor as I have in the past. A lot of the technical concerns were at the forefront of my mind, and I believe as they become more second nature I will be able to focus more and more on playing the moment and letting the rest fall into place.

February 7, 2013

Tonight we had our second preview performance, and I feel like I was finally able to get out of my head and play the moments with Elinor. I felt connected to her on stage rather than concerned with my technique. I am glad I was able to let that stuff go and really read Elinor and

respond to what she was giving me. I still pointed my key lines and played with the musicality and range of my voice, but it was done to play my actions as the character rather than as a technical exercise.

February 8, 2013

It is opening night tonight! I feel ready to do the show. I am in a good place with the character of Lucy. I know what she wants, and I have a good grasp of her journey over the course of the play. I also feel like I have much more command of my props and am able to handle them all with more grace and purpose. Yet, within that framework I feel I have room to play and be spontaneous in the moment. I am excited and a bit nervous, and this is a good place to be for opening!

Well, we just finished our opening night production, and besides a few mishaps with props, a bit of an issue opening my parasol at one point, and my stole slipping off my arm at another, it was successful. Perhaps some nerves contributed to the clumsy moments with the props, but otherwise, I felt I told Lucy's story with clarity. I did not have quite as much fun playing with Elinor and really exploring the musicality and annoying nasality of my voice as yesterday, but I felt much more nervous tonight as well. It is funny because even though it was opening night, the audience was probably larger on the two preview nights. So, the nerves came from my own anxiety over the phrase 'opening night'.

February 10, 2013

I finally have found a nice, solid place with Lucy. I am having great fun playing up the grating quality of Lucy's voice and being open to the spontaneity of the moment, reading Elinor

and responding to her reactions. I happily noticed that instead of anticipating my next line, I am living in the present moment and able to adjust and react to what is happening in the specific moment in time. This is very freeing as an actor and exciting because I am open to the experience of living onstage.

February 21, 2013

Today we had our first school show for a group of students from five local high schools. We went into the show somewhat nervous and doubtful of how the audience would receive the play. We thought the genre and style of this Jane Austen adaptation might be ridiculed by their contemporary tastes, but we were pleasantly surprised to be proven wrong. They had immediate and intense reactions to what was happening on the stage before them. Their feelings were extremely clear during every moment. We would hear raucous laughter one moment and challenging comments the next, depending on what was unfolding before them. This might have been my favorite performance yet because it was so exciting to experience these very passionate reactions. Part of the thrill was also that they had reactions in places where other audiences had not responded previously.

After the show we held a short question and answer session with the audience and the cast. Their questions were refreshing and honest. Many of them wanted to know more about all the behind the scenes elements and work that goes into a show, asking questions about the set and the costumes. Others were very interested in how casting choices were made and then how the process of character development unfolded. One student asked how long it took to learn and practice the slap between Lucy and Fanny, and we talked about Bill Warriner's part in choreographing it and how Kelly Kilgore, the actress who plays Fanny, and I hold our own fight

call during intermission to prepare for the moment. Another student asked me how I was able to play Lucy everyday and not get really annoyed by her. This made me laugh, but it felt like triumph too because it meant that my vocal choices and pointed lines were coming across quite clearly. I told the student that it was fun to be able to play with these annoying and mischievous qualities on the stage because we don't get to act like this in everyday life.

The very involved and interested reaction of this young audience just goes to show the timelessness of Austen's classic story. After all, as Jory asserted, the conflicts and trials of love are timeless. Piper Patterson, who is playing Marianne, may have put it best when she said these high school students know exactly what it means to love someone and not be able to be with them. This is a part of daily life during high school. This is why it is essential that these stories keep being brought to life to be experienced at the theatre.

CHAPTER 6: REFLECTION

Performing the role of Lucy Steele in Jory's adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater was a wonderful and challenging experience. By drawing from the psychology and traditions of England's Regency era, the text from which Lucy originated, the playwright's own insight, and the practical skills gained during my acting training, I found an honest path to the character of Lucy Steele. This preparatory work, as well as the rehearsal process, helped me to achieve my goal and step inside the mind and body of this Regency era woman.

In one of the guiding inquiries for this thesis I consider how I, a contemporary woman, can honestly embody a Regency era character. However, after going through this process, I want to broaden the question to examine how I, a contemporary actor, can honestly embody a character from any time, or world, that is not my own. I would argue that in order to assimilate into any foreign world on the stage, the best thing an actor can do is delve into the culture and customs of that world with the whole body and mind. The key to this fully invested process is an actor's willingness to be flexible. Flexibility is required to step into a new world with very old rules. It was not until the intricate Regency era etiquette became more second nature to me that I was able to move with ease and confidence in Lucy's world. Moreover, although Lucy's actions raise questions as to her motives, I, the actor, had to walk in her shoes without judgment. Instead, I had to justify her actions in terms of the world in which she lives. It is the actor's job to seek out humanity in every character she is playing. Even the most criticized character has humanity in her. Lucy is doing what she believes she must do to succeed in her environment.

Since this was my first production at a theatre of this caliber, I want to reflect on what is involved in the rehearsal process for a high quality, professional regional theatre production. To begin with, I really enjoyed working with Mark Routhier, the director of *Sense and Sensibility*, Jim Helsinger, the artistic director of the theatre, and the entire artistic staff at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater. A large amount of time was spent shaping the scenes, finding nuances within them, and defining the overall arc of the story. The initial table work sessions during which the cast read through scenes and discussed beats, motivations, and choices helped get everyone on the same page before getting up on our feet. Then, the numerous rehearsals spent working through the details of scenes really solidified character and allowed room to try playing different actions and adjust blocking until we discovered what felt most natural and told the clearest story. I found the time used to discuss and practice period movement to be especially helpful. Even though I was not directly involved in the ballroom dances, I, along with the rest of the cast, attended the session during which the choreographer, W. Robert Sherry, taught the choreography. This, as well as Helsinger's period movement session, gave us all a feel for the style of movement and manners during the Regency era. The costume designer, Jack Smith, also contributed to the creation of our world by adding the many props and accessories to each character and sharing his knowledge of how to appropriately utilize them.

Another major aspect of this thesis involves the application of the practical tools gained during my acting training to character work in rehearsal and in production. In developing this character it was extremely helpful to have the skill set I honed during my acting training from the University of Central Florida at my disposal. I exercised my stage dialects training by using a standard British dialect. In addition I revisited what I had studied in Linklater and Estill voice

training, exploring the effect of speaking in a higher vocal register and utilizing nasal resonance. I was pleased to discover that these choices also facilitated more inflection and musicality in my voice, which are both inherent to the British dialect. My theatre styles acting class, as well as the various movement classes in which I participated, gave me a knowledge base from which to explore how Lucy moved in her world. Furthermore, my acting training assisted in all the work that went into this process involving character motivation, breaking down beats, and playing different actions.

One of the greatest challenges I faced was finding the proper balance between Lucy's manipulations and her genuine excitement. This could also be seen as the balance between the personalities of Austen's two Miss Steeles, Lucy and Anne. Initially I underlined every line with excitement, and I struggled a great deal with finding the malicious, controlling side of Lucy's personality. I had to face my own insecurities as an actor and make unique and bold choices, rather than cowering to the more experienced actor playing Elinor. I made a conscious decision to stop hiding and start finding Lucy's voice. Once I began playing with my higher vocal register and exploring the nasal resonance of my voice, I began to find the animation in this character. Lucy's voice became loud, brash, and very bold. I remember I began to own this choice during the first space through in the Margeson Theater. I only wish I had gone for this choice earlier in the process because I felt like I was still getting a hold on it during the first performances.

Furthermore, I grappled with variety and intention when delivering my lines. Going into the rehearsals I knew what Lucy was saying and what she wanted, but I did not know which tactics she would play to achieve her objective. I had much more success once I chose my key lines and words, underlining them with a pointed tone, vocal infection, or a specific glance

towards Elinor. This helped to establish my objective and my assertive control. When approaching a role like this in the future I will attempt to come into rehearsals with these choices available from the onset.

Another challenge I faced, stepping into this role and this world, was dealing with all the exterior parts of the world. Although I had acquired basic period movement skills during my studio work at the University of Central Florida, I did not initially spend a great amount of time applying detailed movement work to Lucy's character. It was not until props were introduced that I focused my work to specifically examine how Lucy moved or interacted with other characters in her world. These pieces, or accessories, served as a challenge themselves. The long dress, parasol, stole, handbag, letter, and locket felt foreign to me, as a woman living in 2013, since I do not handle these accessories everyday. While managing these props was difficult, they served as physical keys into Lucy's world. It was not until the last preview that I began to utilize them with grace and confidence. When playing a period role in the future with props and accessories from another era, I will spend much more time experimenting with these pieces beforehand. Though they may seem like small details, in the end they can provide a direct link into the foreign world. Also, I did not consider using touch to serve my objective until Routhier suggested playing with it in particular moments. For example, by grabbing Elinor's hand, I found a solid way to establish a connection, or emphasize my point. Touch served as a very helpful tool for supporting, or coloring, specific lines.

In this thesis I utilize Jory's non-traditional format of character and text analysis. This format focuses on discovering character by analyzing the structure of the text. The emphasis is on breaking down what is already provided rather than adding my own insights to what is there.

In some ways this felt unfulfilling to my imagination as an actor. However, this form of analysis succeeded in pointing to the objective facts in each scene. Instead of subjectively judging the characters' actions in a scene I broke down the structure of the text to figure out the objective facts. Then when I took the next step and began to examine Lucy's motives, I discovered that all the answers could be found in Lucy's language. This supports Jory's own assertion that everything an actor plays must derive from the text. An actor must be able to justify motives with the words provided. This felt somewhat restrictive at first, but as I broke the puzzle of the text down, the pieces all became more distinct, ultimately offering an array of options. With this format I was still aloud to contribute unique ideas, but I had to justify them with the text.

My next question ponders what it requires to take a classic piece of literature and turn it into a play. Over the course of the adaptation process we faced some major challenges. In this particular circumstance Jory kept the dialogue in his adapted text very close to the original, but he sacrificed detail in the scenes for a greater number of scenes. Most of the scenes in the play are one to two pages in length and lack the depth of development found in Austen's text. This made for many frenetic transitions that gave the play somewhat of a choppy rhythm. In addition, a lot of the characters' detailed back-story is lost. For example, as I mentioned in chapter three, in the adaptation Lucy and Elinor have no relationship prior to the scene in which Lucy divulges her secret engagement, whereas in the novel their friendship has already been established by this point, creating slightly different circumstances for Lucy's big reveal. Furthermore, apart from Lucy's scene with Elinor, Marianne, and Edward at Mrs. Jennings' home in London, Lucy and Edward's relationship is given no time at all in the play. Another personal challenge I faced with this adaptation was dealing with Jory's version of Lucy, an amalgamation of two characters with

two distinct personalities. Attempting to flesh out a full and honest character in the play from two contrasting characters in the novel proved to be a great struggle during the rehearsal process.

However, I would argue that this adaptation succeeded by making the relationships the driving force of the play. Even though the pace was frenetic at times, the story evolved around the development of the characters' relationships. Jory particularly did a wonderful job of staying loyal to the leading Dashwood ladies, Elinor and Marianne. Their personalities, their struggles, and their journeys were fully fleshed out. He did not sacrifice any quality in the development of these characters in order to further the plot, rather the plot revolved around their development, and rightly so, as they are at the center of this story. Furthermore, the specificity of the characters' movement, mannerisms, patterns of speech, costumes, and accessories helped transport us into the world of the play.

Overall this adaptation stayed close in form to the original story, but I wonder how the process might change if the adapted text were further from the original. In chapter three I argue for the use of the original source as a resource. The additional details helped provide insight and gave nuance to my character. In addition, I felt it was my responsibility to be familiar with the origin of this classic character. I believe that even if the adaptation were further from the original it would be helpful to compare the two. An understanding of the original world from which the adaptation arises, offers additional insight and additional choices. How relevant it is, though, I believe would depend upon how closely the work in question mirrors the original. Furthermore, being aware of changes, such as eliminated, added, or fused characters, omitted narration, and shortened scenes, helped inform the development of my character.

After working through this process I want to contemplate how the contemporary perspective informed the understanding of this production. As the process evolved it also raised the question of relevance. What does it mean to produce a Regency era production in this current era? How is it relevant? First, I want to argue that there are more similarities than differences between England's Regency world and the current world of the United States of America. Perhaps most striking is the presence of decorum, a major operating factor in both societies. We may have different rules concerning how to behave in each society, but I would argue that decorum is as relevant now as it was then. For example, in the current professional, or business, world people are expected to conduct themselves in a particular manner, interact with others in an appropriate form, and dress in a certain style. Furthermore, our current political system is so inundated by intricate and petty rules, not unlike some of the rules from England's Regency era, that we can hardly seem to progress as a democracy. In addition, the division among the classes has not subsided, but rather the factors that contribute to classism have multiplied. In the Regency era classism existed on more of a formal vertical ladder, whereas in the current day, because of the various contributing factors, classism exists on more of a shifting plane, making it more tedious and convoluted. Thus, it can be harder to find a set social circle in which to fit.

I would argue that our awareness of the feminist movements allows us to sympathize with the characters and their plight for position in society, specifically the more limited women's plight for position. We are able to empathize with a character like Lucy who must exploit her engagement to get ahead. The clearer sexism in the Regency era world invites us to consider the more ambiguous sexism of our time because, though it is less obvious, it still exists. Also, on the sense and sensibility spectrum I would argue that in Austen's time practical sense won over

impulsive sensibility. Sensibility was not as useful for succeeding in the Regency era society and it could even be seen as something to fear. After all, Marianne's sensibility drives her to suffering and illness. Emotional honesty and emotional vulnerability are more respected by contemporary society. We often seek to nurture these attributes in friends and family members, allowing us to empathize with Marianne's sensibility.

Despite the time travel, this production spoke to contemporary audiences. In particular I recall the engaged and interested response of our two student audiences. They were invested in the characters and the relationships, and it was immediately clear how the issues at the heart of this play are completely relevant today, especially for today's youth. For example, the struggles of wanting to be with the person you cannot be with and not being able to say what you want to say represent the plight of every high school student. In addition, balancing that line between practical sense and emotional sensibility is a relevant struggle in any individual's life. Then, most simply, the humor inherent in the foolish behavior and trials of people in love is something today's audience can completely understand. As far as Lucy's character is concerned, she is a strong woman that follows what she wants, no matter the obstacle, and this reflects the behavior of many contemporary women.

At last I consider what it means to write an academic thesis about the development and the performance of a character. This has been a challenging pursuit, but it has taught me a great deal about myself as a person, as a writer, and as an actor. I chose to complete this work while also participating in another intense activity, an acting/education internship at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater. This job requires great energy and time in itself. By making it through these two processes simultaneously I have proven to myself that I can handle more than I

originally believed. I learned to budget my time more efficiently than ever before and to focus my work. As a writer I discovered the benefits of making writing into an every day habit, realizing that if I stopped writing for even a few days it was much more challenging to find the motivation and the focus to pick up where I left off. Finally, as an actor this process forced me to be specific and detailed with my work in a way I have not been in the past. Because I was constantly evaluating the character, the world, and my choices in my writing, my acting profited in return. This process taught me the benefits of hard and focused work. In the end, I can take pride in my struggles and own my work with dignity.

To touch one final time upon the major topic of this thesis, while every piece of theatre represents its own time, past, present, or future, the one constant is that humans desire to survive and to thrive in their own time, despite the unique challenges of that time. This basic human truth can help an actor connect to any world and role into which she is asked to step. The process outlined in this paper is not a conclusive approach to this kind of role, but rather a model from which an actor may draw inspiration to begin a journey into another world.

APPENDIX A: NOTES FROM JON JORY'S MASTER CLASS IN ACTING

- Acting has four legs: psychological, physical, vocal, and craft.
- Craft is hard to teach theoretically. Craft is the delivery system for the heart and mind. We will work on craft exercises. There are 70 different craft values.
- The mix: not too much of any one of the four legs.
- Don't make everything a ‘moment’. If everything is a ‘moment’ there are no ‘moments’.
- Structure is valuable to the actor. Within the structure, the actor is free to be spontaneous.
- Actors lock into rhythms too quickly, locking in the sense as well.
- Movement comes from thought; thought units create opportunity to physicalize transition. You can use the transition to create physicality.
- Your thought process as an actor is the sexiest thing about you. If you want to be sexy on stage, think. You want to build your tolerance for thinking in front of people.
- Words come from silence. Words cannot be produced without thought. They are the last thing we do, not the first. Silence is the basic and words are the dessert. You have to know why you are being silent. After your intro, give yourself silence to find thoughts. Don't use dialogue as a protection.
- When you leave the audition, make sure you are able to describe what the auditioners look like. Allow yourself time.
- We’re not interested in emotion. Hold back emotion. Once you release it, it's lost.
- Points of focus are important: left, right, center, in front, behind, up, and down.
- You are working as an actor out of a received vocabulary. Physicality is a physical vocabulary. We all know our own physical vocabulary but that is not enough.

- There are two kinds of gestures. You should have a mix of both. Intuitive: from the nervous system, inside the box of the body. Intentional: something you are aware of, outside of the body, fighting the intuitive.
- Gestures can move fluidly in and out of each other. Watch out for the gun-fighter gesture (comes from and goes back to the hip).
- One of the most important things on stage is rarity. Think of yourself as a visual object.
- Energy cannot be a constant. Every 40 seconds stop acting and just be. It's okay for a small role to stay high energy. For a large part you have to drop that or you will be abrasive.
- In a realistic work we cannot be in a non-behavioral world. Your clothes and the set are props. Behavior is the actor's friend. Do an activity and finish it - allow that to happen on stage. As an actor you have to move through possibilities.
- Nothing that continues, reads (vocal energy, gesture, stillness). The strongest choice is to basically only work physically on the punctuation. Clean physicality happens around the punctuation. Dirty physicality involves simultaneously moving and speaking.
- Know how to throw a line away. Pull down in volume. Speed it up. Lose focus/emphasis.
- Part of the variety is letting go of our acting self. You cannot be fabulous all the time, it's important to be boring.
- How to handle auditions: Make bold choices. Have a good handle on the text. Allow the auditioner to see you think. Take direction. Allow the auditioner to see that you can move. Show you have a sense of the stage and that you are a physical being. Allow the auditioner to see that you like it and are comfortable. Enjoy yourself. Show vocal variety

(diction, changes in rhythm, tonal change). Allow impulse. Allow the thinking process to affect the body. Create clear transitions. Show how you get from one idea to the next. Know the structure of the text.

- Jon Jory supplied the following text to the actors for material to work with during the master class:

> I always open up the lab at seven. Stroke of seven. Boom. Somebody had opened the cages. Rats are everywhere. Rats on the shelves, in the beakers, up on the fixtures, chewing up sponges. When we come in they all stop dead and look at us. Looked at us like we were the experiment. I don't know why, I just opened the window, went out and locked up. Stood out there and cried.

- This is how to break down the structure of the text; this is the usual structure and order: First, identify the thesis statement. In the above example, the thesis statement is that rats are everywhere. Next, identify the support material, or the evidence. In the above text, the evidence is the rats on the shelves, in the beakers, on the fixtures, and chewing up sponges. Finally, identify the conclusion. In the above example, the conclusion is that the speaker stood outside and cried.
- Always know what the piece is about. Be able to identify the theme of the piece. Ask yourself, what kind of moral lecture is the play? In the above text the theme, or moral lecture, is the role reversal of the speaker with the rats.
- The big secret is the obstacle and the objective. What do you want the other person to do, feel, and understand – in that order? There has to be an obstacle.

APPENDIX B: PERSONAL EMAIL INTERVIEW WITH JON JORY

1) What do you feel makes the story of *Sense and Sensibility* timeless?

First of all, family relationships are always timeless. The mistakes made in love are always timeless. The conflict between good sense and passion is always timeless. But most importantly, good writing is timeless.

2) What do you think Lucy Steele's role is in this story?

Lucy creates the triangle, which drives Elinor's story and as such is a crucial plot device. Elinor has a problem sharing her emotions and Lucy generates emotions she has no place for and no one to seek solace from.

3) What do you think we, as modern people, can learn from this Regency era society?

Good manners are a glue, which makes social intercourse possible. If there are no restraints on what we may say and do a chaos results that can strike at the very heart of what we like to call 'Civilization'. Good manners makes a virtue of restraint, and mitigates the impact of mistakes and misjudgments. Telling only the truth (as Ibsen shows in The Wild Duck) can destroy as well as enlighten.

4) What is your connection to Jane Austen? What is it about her work, and *Sense and Sensibility* in particular, that speaks to you?

Jane Austen was a social satirist in her time. This is the most nature of Austen's novels with two heroines. The sister relationship between Elinor and Marianne is the best one outside of Chekhov. At the theater you can encounter three generations of women coming to see it.

APPENDIX C: JEFFREY ULLOM BOOK REVIEW

While a good deal of information exists regarding the American regional theatre movement, which began in the 1960s, Jeffrey Ullom's book is the first major exploration of Actors Theatre of Louisville and the great influence the Humana Festival had in the development of new plays. This work fills an important gap in the study of the history of American theatre and play development. Ullom takes the reader on a year-by-year analysis of the theatre and its festival, detailing the process through which former artistic director, Jon Jory, created and developed the event, and how Marc Masterson, current artistic director, is maintaining it. A former dramaturg at ATL, Ullom presents an informed point of view, supporting claims with detailed evidence. Throughout the book he draws various comparisons between ATL and other regional theatres, supplies quotations from ATL staff, press, critics, and patrons, and presents solid numbers and statistics. The irrevocable effect of ATL and the Humana Festival on American Theatre trends and the development of new plays is evident by the end of this book.

Ullom begins with the first step of the process in developing a regional theatre in his chapter, "The Founding of a Divided Theatre." He takes the reader through a succinct history of the regional theatre movement, detailing the establishment of Theatre '47, the regional theatre of Margo Jones, arguably the creator of the movement and the decentralization of American theatre from Broadway. Ullom asserts the major challenge of every regional theatre to be "[d]eveloping and sustaining local support" (8), without which a theatre will fail, regardless of location. He stresses the value of balance in selecting both plays that appeal to local audience tastes and challenge the audience, which he later argues to be one of Jory's greatest practices. After this introduction to regional theatre, Ullom moves the discussion to the establishment of Actors Theatre of Louisville and its rocky beginning with the division between Richard Block's

methodological approach towards Theatre Louisville and Ewel Cornett's impulsive approach towards Actors Inc. Ullom's first chapter sets up important background information about ATL and regional theatre in general, providing the reader with a clear context for the Humana Festival.

Ullom then turns to the main figure in his discussion, Jon Jory, detailing the first phase of the new leadership. Ullom studies Jory's careful consideration of audience preferences and his tireless work in establishing and gaining audience trust through his own personal showmanship and presentation of accessible works. Ullom draws comparisons between the successful strategies of Jory and Joseph Papp, the producing director of the Public Theatre/New York Shakespeare Festival. When Jory enlarged his operation, part of this success can be attributed to following Papp's example of expanding due to a growing audience. Ullom continues to compare the approaches and decisions of Jory and Papp throughout the book, as well as other producing directors, including Marshall Mason at Circle Repertory Company, Nina Vance at Alley Theatre, and Zelda Fichandler at Arena Stage.

Ullom intensively examines how the Humana festival was established, addressing one of the three essential questions of the book. In the fall of 1976 Jory took his first step in establishing the festival by presenting a collection of new plays. Ullom celebrates Jory's calculative and effective model, turning the presentation of new plays into a festival and presenting more popular and accessible works, so that it would be seen as a low-risk event. Just as Jory went through a systemic process when developing his festival, Ullom keenly describes Jory's successful method of expanding the event, "Jory astutely realized that the festival first would have to be a local success before it could attain national recognition" (47). Ullom later discusses

how Jory came to give the festival its final name, turning to the Humana Corporation, a local health maintenance organization, which sought to increase its involvement in the community. Because he provides this information at a later point in the book, one of the only times when Ullom writes without regards to chronology, it is noticeable and disrupts the flow of the narrative.

Ullom's next chapters address his second major question, "how has Actors Theatre utilized its fame to help further the growth of the festival and influence trends in American theatre?" (3). As he spends most of the book addressing this question, it could be argued that this is the most relevant discussion of the book. Ullom thoroughly details the growth of ATL's reputation, first at a national level as plays which premiered at the Humana Festival continued to win awards and travel throughout the country, gaining attention of the national press, and then at an international level, as Jory commissioned playwrights from outside the United States, including Athol Fugard, Wole Soyinka, and Brian Friel, and took Humana Festival productions, such as Marsha Norman's *Getting Out*, on international tours. Ullom defines how the festival's recognition allowed Jory the freedom to explore and change the focus from production to process, fostering growth. First, Jory turned the festival into a writer's festival when he allowed playwrights to become more involved in the rehearsal process, in turn creating greater responsibility for the literary department and making the dramaturg an essential component. Under Jory's leadership, a play could travel from one regional theatre to another and not New York, but the playwright would still maintain income and find future work around the country. Jory nurtured the careers of diverse playwrights from Marsha Norman to Naomi Wallace among many others. Ullom continues his meticulous research, further following the festival's growth as

Jory explored different venues such as a warehouse for Gary Leon Hill's *Food from Trash* and the lobby for the T(ext) Shirt Plays, various genres, actor-audience relationship with Anne Bogart's *Cabin Pressure*, and new commissioning approaches. Throughout the book Ullom fairly represents differing points of view. Ullom includes quotes from the opposing voices of Julie Crutcher, former literary manager at ATL, who argued that the disproportionate commissions between playwrights and novelists was "'misdirected, so misdirected'" (102), and Jory, who is quoted saying, "'We can't make it nice for everybody. Our position is 'We're looking for work,' not 'We're supporting playwrights'" (104). After continuing to thoroughly describe the years when the Humana Festival fell into a rut, becoming a trend follower due to insufficient staff investment, Ullom closes his discussion about Jory by detailing the final successful phase of Jory's time at ATL and his legacy for the festival and American theatre.

Ullom's last major question, which addresses how the event has changed in format and reputation since Jory's departure, is discussed in the chapter, "The Education of Marc Masterson." Ullom analyzes the transition from one artistic director to the next, detailing the effect of any change in staffing at ATL, the current financial situation, Masterson's personality, and Masterson's approach to the festival compared to Jory's approach. More importantly, Ullom goes on to evaluate changes within the Humana Festival, including more experimental play selections and a new Technology project in which electronics were used as a means of exploring the boundaries of live performance. Ullom notes the initial failures Masterson faced when trying to push his own agenda without audience support, but he goes on to assert Masterson's progress after implementing Jory's formula for success, "balance and visibility" (159). Ullom explores how Masterson gained audience support and attention of the national press by commissioning

more established playwrights. Eventually, Masterson was commissioning returning playwrights, whom he originally discovered, such as Theresa Rebeck, Jordan Harrison, Kia Corthron, John Belluso, Adam Bock, and Allison Moore, turning the Humana Festival into his own event.

Although the period of Masterson's leadership is relatively new, Ullom spends a minimal amount of time addressing the changes in the Humana Festival since Jory's departure, in comparison with his handling of the other two major questions in the book. Regardless, Ullom's book clearly meets the challenge of exploring how the Humana Festival was created and maintained and how it has affected American theatre. Following the text, Masterson includes a comprehensive appendix, which details the yearly production history of the Humana Festival. Ullom's thorough approach and inclusion of various sources allows for a complete and vital discussion of Jory's legacy and the imprint of the Humana Festival on American theatre and new play development.

APPENDIX D: LUCY STEELE COSTUME RENDERING

Figure 1: Lucy Steele Costume Rendering

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